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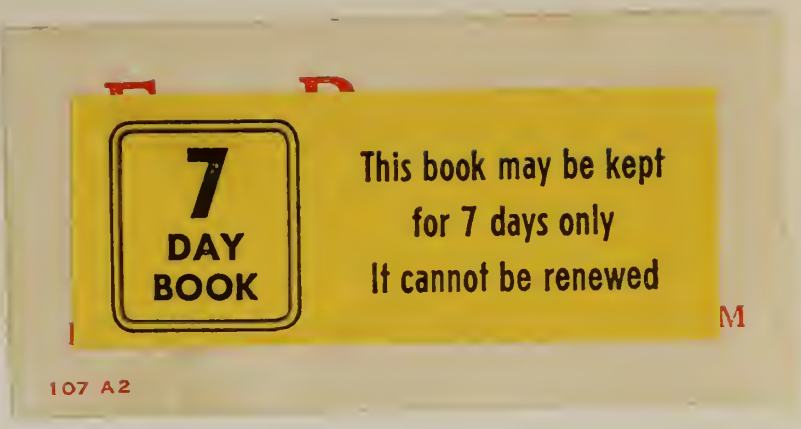

WOODSTOCK LETTERS

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CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER 1958

SCHOLA BREVIS CONVOCATION 1958 323
Report of Terrence J. Toland, S.J. 323
Address of Edward J. Sponga, S.J. 325

LOYOLA HALL, LE MOYNE COLLEGE 331
John W. Lynch

PIERRE LEJAY 334
Bernard A. Fiekers

LINCOLN IN A CASSOCK 335
Louis Berkeley Kines

BOOKS OF INTEREST TO OURS 399

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The 1958 Schola Brevis Convocation Of Woodstock College

Held on September 9, 1958, in Sestini Hall of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology of Woodstock College, Woodstock, Maryland.

I

Report of Reverend Terrence J. Toland, S.J.

As Woodstock begins its ninetieth year, it is my duty to submit an introductory report, briefly and factually, concerning some elements of our academic situation.

In the Jesuit houses of the Maryland and New York Provinces, as well as in several centers of theology in the United States, present-day Woodstock is known for its spirit of general content with the management of its community task of theological formation. It must be immediately pointed out, however, that this basic content includes the vibrant challenge of a healthy impatience which seeks for ever-possible improvement.

Praise

Members of the editorial staff of *Time Inc.* recently referred to Woodstock as an institution of "vital intellectual churning." To sample from the personal comments of the Middle States Evaluating Committee which examined Woodstock in 1958, Rear Admiral Gordon McLintock of the United States Merchant Marine Academy wrote, "The merits of Woodstock are such that reaffirmation of accreditation was never an issue." According to the chairman of the visiting team, Dr. Finla Crawford of Syracuse University, the evaluation of Woodstock was a highpoint in his experience with the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The official report speaks of Woodstock as a "superior," "highly competent," institution with "standards and procedures for distinguished work." More significant, perhaps, than these generic laudatory remarks were two concrete facts noted in the committee's report. I refer first of all to Wood-

stock's universal cooperation in the work of preparing the document of self-evaluation, and, secondly, to the enthusiastic seizure of the opportunity for pertinent questions posed by ourselves and to ourselves concerning the actual and possible Woodstock.

On the other hand, the doubt is being raised in some quarters whether or not Woodstock is presently touched in some measure with a certain dilettantism, lacking, that is, sufficient theological focus and depth in both interests and programs. What is observed here is the existence of this doubt. My report should also echo the disappointment on the part of some concerning the overall, general tone of performance during the examinations of the past scholastic year. Finally, and more summarily, it must be remembered that in the human situation at Woodstock there are, and always will be, problems which call for imaginative solutions and responsible improvement.

Changes

Looking ahead, we might detail in cursory fashion just a few items which were originally the concern of the faculty and student body, and which subsequently appeared in the report of the Middle States Evaluating Committee.

1. The desirability of more effective use of the summer period, apart from the time devoted to certain required courses, prompted the recent program of planned reading, workshops, and modern language study. Further analysis, reflection, reports, and discussion will determine our future policy in these areas.

2. Both faculty and student self-evaluation reports recommended a full-time professor of homiletics. We now have one.

3. The Evaluating Committee's suggestion that profit could be gained from smaller classes was the principal incentive to make the present division of fourth year into two sections.

4. The advisability of an earlier correlation between Sacred Scripture and dogmatic theology led to a change of schedule we shall inaugurate in second semester of this school year. Hereafter, Scripture classes will start in the second half of second year, and, while the total number of class hours will remain the same as before, the course will be extended over four, instead of three, semesters. This should make Scripture

seminars more feasible and will, in the future, eliminate the present crowding of the Scripture program. Moreover, with the arrival of a new professor of Scripture, we have, after several years, achieved a more complete and stable department.

In general, the entire academic community looks to the coming year with a conviction of the readiness on the part of the authorities to hear and honor suggestions, to encourage initiative, realistically animated by an awareness of the necessity that suggestions emerge from a knowledge of our commitment to Church and Society legislation, as well as—and more importantly, perhaps—from a sense of responsibility toward the ideals of the priesthood and its foundation of theological scholarship within the framework of the Society.

II

Address of Reverend Edward J. Sponga, S.J.

While it is hardly to be expected that a single talk can effect any major change in one's habitual outlook, there are certain times in the yearly cycle of events which are suited to, and require, a more formal and explicit taking or re-taking of position. The beginning of the academic year is one of these privileged moments.

This morning we solemnized the beginning of this year with the Mass of the Holy Spirit, wishing to symbolize in this supreme action of self-oblation in union with Christ our petition that the wisdom and strength of the Holy Spirit, whom Christ sent, may be with us as we go through the discipline of another year of theological study. The eminent fittingness of this act needs no proof.

In this convocation, I shall attempt to recall to your minds the significance of what we are about to take up once again in the course of the many years of formation which the Society wisely gives its own. True to this aim I shall try to situate this year of study in the wider context of the life of a Jesuit, who is a priest or preparing to be one, and in the more restricted context of Woodstock in the year 1958. What we are and shall be is certainly fashioned to a large degree by the currents that move in our midst. These currents in our home

waters in turn reflect the currents of the wider stream of the world from which we have come, to which we shall return and with which, even in our relative isolation here, we cannot afford to be unconcerned. What are these currents? Let me attempt to depict them as I see them at Woodstock.

We are concerned these days with many things. We must be. There is so much in our modern culture which demands our acute attention. Somehow we shall have to be at home with many people and conflicting currents; with the theologian and the philosopher; with the scientist and the educator; with social scientist and the laboring man; with the problems and forces at work in family life and in the individual's total personality. Furthermore, we feel that at least in one or other of these areas we should be prepared to say and do something significant; something that is in tune with the concrete reality of the situation. We feel, therefore, in need at once of a breadth of interest and understanding, and of a depth of experience and comprehension.

Our Dilemma

It seems to me that here we face a dilemma, at least in appearance, for breadth seems to work against depth and depth against breadth. We likewise find that for various personal and social reasons, human impulse tends to resolve this dilemma by an option for a certain kind of breadth to the consequent denial of depth. For to know something about many things caters to a natural sense of curiosity. There is a certain pleasure and prestige in being able to appear informed on all or many topics; there is a reassuring feeling that one is ready for anything. There is also the sense that one is accomplishing much; that he is vital, alive, and that his life is full. If at times there is an advertence to a lack of depth, this is quickly forgotten because there is always some new thing to throw oneself into; and the sense of lack of depth arises less and less frequently and becomes more and more fleeting till at length it is no longer experienced as a loss.

There is another form of this breadth *mystique*. It is more subtle. The student feels the need for concentration in some field. He gives it time and interest. He reads many things about it; he talks frequently about it. He uses up much

energy surveying the various facets of the area. He comes to be able to repeat formulae and manipulate terminology with dexterity. He knows what the latest authorities have said. He thus acquires a sense of accomplishment, a sense of security. Here at least, he believes, he knows something; he must be reckoned with.

But in whatever form it appears, I wonder whether we are not dealing here with an old error in some of its newer forms of dress. I wonder whether we are not simply witnessing a modern device for avoiding the toil, the discipline, the dedication required for any true creation—be it the creation of the God-image in self or others. While undoubtedly breadth of interest and understanding are essential for the full human person—and certainly for the Jesuit priest—the real question is: is true breadth attained by a proliferation of involvements in many interests or is it rather achieved as a by-product of a movement from the opposite direction, that is, from the direction of depth, of discipline, of method.

Summer Activities

During the past summer here at Woodstock we sought to fulfill what we thought was a need. We sought to afford many opportunities to put ourselves in some contact with a number of fields of modern concern, as many as circumstances permitted. While we were aware that the limitation of time would make for a degree of superficiality, we felt that what we did had at least the value of bringing to the front of our attention an awareness that we are not studying theology in a vacuum; that there are real and vital problems facing us as Jesuit priests, and that there are others struggling with these problems and solving them with some degree of success. We felt that if we wanted to come to our theology alive and active, with personal rather than merely formal questioning, it was good and necessary to immerse ourselves in and to wrestle with some of the active problems of our day. We were aware also that our concern was not primarily directed to the objective content of any field of knowledge or technique. Rather we felt that it was the creation of a sense of need, an atmosphere of anxiety, a ferment of interest which would carry over into the more serious work of the study of theology.

Did we succeed in our purpose? At this moment I do not know. Reactions were varied. Some feel that what we did was valuable. Others judge that the psychology of the enterprise was wrong. The matter will receive more discussion and analysis. Furthermore, since we were interested to a large extent in creating attitudes, which are not things easily measurable, we shall have to watch during the coming academic year to see what fruits we have reaped. Whatever be our judgment, however, about the future of workshops and their like, I think that at this point we have been made more alert than ever to the fact that an experiment in breadth has made more imperative than ever the need for caution if we are to reach an understanding of where we stand. An experiment in breadth brings with it a proportionate need to understand that breadth of interest will be valuable, will avoid the danger of superficiality and a certain dangerous kind of merely pragmatic interest in knowledge, only if it is itself the product of depth.

Love of Truth

We are at the point where we must ask seriously what is the moving force behind the spirit now present at Woodstock. Is this interest in many things merely the manifestation of that type of broadmindedness of which I spoke earlier, which springs from an impatience with serious, careful, methodic study? Or is it a broadmindedness that is the overflow of the love of truth for itself in all its manifestations? Each one must answer this question for himself as he proceeds with the study of theology this coming year. Your task now is to study scientific theology; to study theology in a scholarly way, in a way which is not primarily dictated by use-value, no matter how apostolic the use may be, but which is inspired by the love to know the truth for its own sake. Certainly our theology has use-value. With it we are to save souls, to advance the welfare of the Church in all areas of modern life. But this must come as the overflow of one's dedication to the truth for itself, because the truth is God and God is reality.

Yet when we speak of the love of truth and the love of theology, let us not think in terms of temperamental or psychological congeniality with study. The genuine love of truth

demands self-sacrifice. It demands dedication of life and energy. It demands hours of painstaking tracking down of avenues of approach. It does indeed have its own kind of rewards, but we must be careful lest the quick, apparent, and personally gratifying results we find in techniques render us unwilling to submit to formal method and hours of personal research. We must beware lest a so-called breadth lead us to dismiss formalized knowledge as dead, unreal, antiquated. The truly active and creative mind comes only as the product of disciplined pursuit of the truth as men have struggled with it and reduced the results of their struggle to scientific formulae.

Any field of objective knowledge dictates its own price. It imposes its own methodology and there is no other way of purchasing it. The questions that the minds of the past asked have effected the slow but genuine break-through to the truth of which we are the heirs. But their questions must be real questions to us personally, and they will be such only if we carefully pursue, as they pursued, the particular facets of truth that each age opens up to mankind. This means that we must go to the sources. No one else can do this for us. The teacher cannot do it. Nor can the textbook.

Struggle

What the teacher and the textbook can do, is to give us the method, the feel for the methodic of the science. But the method will not work for us unless we embrace it personally, unless we submit ourselves to its dictates. This does not mean passivity or mere unreasoned accumulation of data. It means that we struggle with the questions to which the formulae of the past are the answers, that we make them felt questions, for they are the doors to the truth. It means that we pursue the historical origins of the questions and answers. If we do this, then the truth will come to us personally. It will not come only as an answer to a question "out there," put perhaps years ago, but to a question that is now our own. Then as truth is slowly comprehended it will at the same time suggest other dimensions, dimensions which will fit our own situation. It will gradually open up new horizons. It will result in a breadth of vision and interest that is not mere dilettantism

but rather the growth of truth into the good which diffuses itself. Then we will be alert to all things, not because we wish to use them for chosen purposes, no matter how altruistic or apostolic, but because all things will in fact appear to us as related in the unifying power of truth itself. Even though the limits of time, energy, and talent render impossible the pursuit of truth down all its avenues, we shall be open to it and catch it as readily as circumstances allow. We shall be delighted when others are able to pursue it where we ourselves cannot go.

I believe that in some sense we must all aspire to scholarship. I do not see how we can have any other choice at this moment. Perhaps we shall not all become master theologians but I do not see how we can safely refuse to put our abilities to the service of such a goal. The study of theology is what God has put us here for. If we refuse to pursue it in a way that respects the discipline that it is, the effect will not be merely that we shall not be theological scholars or that we shall be deficient in knowledge of the objective content of the truths of our faith. The effect will be even more destructive. We shall have undone ourselves in a more radical way. Having refused to submit to the discipline necessary for the attaining of truth in the privileged field of theology, we shall have rendered ourselves less able to embrace truth in any of its manifestations. We shall have rendered ourselves more undisciplined as persons. We shall have therefore laid ourselves open to all the evils to which an undisciplined mind and heart are subject. We shall more readily be the plaything of the passing winds of opinion. We shall be more liable to suffer from the ignorance and malice of others and be in general creatures of moods and fancies to the detriment of our sanctification and salvation. And we shall have hindered the welfare of the Church and the Society.

Conclusion

These are my reflections standing at the threshold of another year. I have attempted in some degree to see whence we have come and whither we are going. Since I have been assessing tendencies and currents, I do not think that there is anything more that can be said even though the future may

force a shift of opinion. I present these reflections because I think that we are at a point where some assessment is necessary and because I desire that you also assess our common effort and your part in it.

If the activity of the past summer has had any helpful result, I believe it is that we have been compelled to look more closely at ourselves corporately and individually. It may be that in many instances we shall find that the things we were quite ready to discard as reactionary and unrealistic are in fact more deeply rooted in reality than our first evaluation recognized. This is good, for then what we embrace we shall embrace more wholeheartedly out of the depth of an experienced conviction. Whatever we do conclude, I hope that at least we have come to realize more maturely that the work of theology before us is of profound significance for what we shall be and what we shall do according to the time, energy and circumstances which God in his own wisdom will provide for us in the years to come.

Reprints of this article can be purchased from WOODSTOCK LETTERS, Woodstock, Maryland, at twenty-five cents per copy or ten copies for two dollars.

Loyola Hall

Rev. John W. Lynch

A visit to the campus of Le Moyne during the late Summer of 1958 makes it almost impossible to believe the progress which the College has made during only eleven brief years. Looking at these graceful, brick buildings outlined against the sky at the top of the hill, driving on these quiet curving roads, walking these spacious lawns an impression of permanency is unavoidable.

To be sure, an atmosphere of youthfulness is here, an air of expectancy, a feeling that just over a happy future much more is to come. But Le Moyne is a magnificent and solid fact. There it is in Central New York, a point of reference,

an accepted reality, and, under the August sun, a campus quietly waiting for the beginning of another school year and the registration of hundreds of new students.

And yet, only a decade ago Le Moyne Heights was an open field. There were no roads, no classrooms, no buildings. The College was not then part of our history; it was merely a dream, an ambition that might be in Catholic education, a hope yet to be fulfilled. Le Moyne, which has become a tradition in the Syracuse area, was, eleven years ago, merely a plan.

Jesuit Faculty

Many factors have combined to build the Le Moyne of 1958. There is the guidance and counsel of the Bishop of Syracuse, there is the good-will and the interest of a whole community, the loyalty of alumni, the generosity of friends and benefactors, the very real devotion of thousands of families whose sons and daughters seek education in the classic and cultural forms, the recognition of the College as an asset by industry, but most of all, and essentially, Le Moyne is what it is because of the living endowment of a Jesuit faculty. To discover the secret of a distinguished college, one has only to observe a black robed priest quietly walking on a campus path with books under his arm and the love of wisdom in his heart.

This year, as the Jesuit faculty move to classrooms they will not be commuters from a distant residence on James Street. They will not have to catch automobiles on a schedule. For the first time in the College history the faculty now live on campus. At a far end of the lawns and crowning the hill the new residence building, Loyola Hall, has already been blessed and is occupied. Thousands of students and alumni and a whole Diocese are happy that it is so, and we offer to the Jesuit teachers our good wishes and congratulations in the sense of giving thanks together. A neighborly housewarming will be managed by our prayers.

The first room in Loyola Hall that a visitor meets on passing through the entrance is the chapel for Le Moyne. Certainly there are individual rooms for the priests, designated by a bulletin board in the hall—rooms, not suites, individual rooms, each with a wash basin, a bed and a shelf for books. Certainly

LOYOLA HALL, FACULTY RESIDENCE, LE MOYNE COLLEGE

there is a dining room, a kitchen, a common meeting room. Certainly there are corridors, and offices within the new Residence. There is a library here too.

But the focal place, the center, the significant roof, the one room about which the whole building has been planned is the chapel. There it is with a blue arch bending over the altar and with pews and kneeling benches for some seventy-five men. A Rood, that is, a Crucifix, the figure of Our Lady and the figure of Saint John, rises over the altar stone and over the Tabernacle. The Stations of the Cross range round the walls for meditation and prayer. To describe the faculty house you would have to mention scholars living in close proximity to the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Individual Chapels

Other chapels are set into the foundations of the building beneath the Main Chapel. Fourteen of them branch off from a central sacristy, and each individual chapel has a door that may be closed during Mass. The idea is that each priest may offer his morning Mass in audible tones from the Missal text while not disturbing the priest offering Mass on an adjacent altar. Father Grewen admits to a favorite project in the sacristy; the water used in the Mass will not be lukewarm. A small refrigerator has been set in the wall and the water will be fresh. I hesitate and will not make here any reference to Moses and the rock.

Along the rear wall of the new faculty house a long, elevated porch stretches, rather like the deck of a ship. Chairs are lined there, like deck chairs, and the view is superb. From the top of the hill, and visible on a clear day, is Oneida Lake. The whole area of Syracuse, past Onondaga Lake and north toward Oswego, is open to view, which is, once we think of it, the wide panorama from whence the entire student body comes. But, should we think of it again, we may reflect that the Loyola Hall porch discloses the area where a Jesuit priest, named Le Moyne, walked in loneliness and prayer some three hundred years ago.

Reprinted from the Syracuse *Catholic Sun* of August 21, 1958.

Rev. Pierre Lejay, S.J.

B. A. Fiekers, S.J.

The *New York Times* for October 12, 1958, carried an Associated Press release and picture on the death of Father Pierre Lejay, noted Jesuit geophysicist. Father Lejay was perhaps best known among American Jesuits through his long association with the Zi-ka-wei Observatory in China prior to 1939. Father was stricken by a heart attack while returning to France aboard the liner *Fiandre* from the United States where he had been engaged in a number of conferences as President of the French Committee for the International Geophysical Year. He died in his sixtieth year.

Father Lejay entered the Society of Jesus in 1915 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1926. He also studied at the Sorbonne and at the Ecole Supérieure d'Electricité. During his Directorship at Zi-ka-wei Father reported that the American continent was slowly moving westward, while Asia was fluctuating between east and west. He based his report on careful measure of longitudes.

In 1945 Father Lejay was named Director of Research of the French National Center of Scientific Research, and in 1946, Director of the French Ionospheric Office. A member of the French Academy, at the time of his death he was also Director of the International Bureau of Graviometry, President of the Bureau of Longitudes and Vice-President of the International Council of Scientific Unions, in addition to his Presidency of the French Committee to IGY. Former offices held by Father Lejay include his Presidency of the International Scientific Radio Union, of the Society of Radio Electricians, of the French Meteorological Society, of the French National Center for Gravimetric Studies (1947) and of the Union of Scientific Radio Electricians (1948). He has published many works on geophysics, gravimetry, astronomy and the ionosphere. May his soul rest in peace.

Lincoln in a Cassock

Life of Father John McElroy, S.J., 1782 to 1847

Louis Berkeley Kines, S.J.

Introduction

The members of the Society of Jesus, known as the "Jesuits," have published for the perusal of their own, in various Provinces of their Order, a collection of letters which over the centuries have contained a very intimate history of their apostolic activities. Such were the *Jesuit Relations,* a primary source for scholars who are interested in the evangelization of French Canada; the *Letters and Notices* for the work accomplished in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and for the American Jesuits the *Woodstock Letters,* published at Woodstock, Maryland. There are in Volumes 1-78 of the *Woodstock Letters* over fifty-four entries about a Father John McElroy, S.J., ranging from sketches of one or two paragraphs to lengthy excerpts from his letters and diaries.

A priest who lived to be over ninety-two years of age, a Jesuit who held the unique distinction of belonging to the three grades—Lay Brother, Scholastic, and Spiritual Coadjutor—in his Order, an apostle who gave the first clergy retreats in such scattered dioceses as St. Louis, New York, and Boston, an army chaplain at the age of sixty-four in the Mexican War of 1846-47, the founder of a college when nearing his seventieth year, the confidant of bishops, the kind counsellor of numerous souls—lay and clerical, such a man deserves that his fine record of nearly a century should be transcribed both as an inspiration to his own brethren who are carrying on the work he so well began, as well as a model for some future young men who will accept the invitation: "Give all to the poor and come, follow me."

This narrative will follow Father McElroy from his entrance into the Society of Jesus in 1806 through the years of his ministry at St. John's in Frederick, Maryland from 1822-45, and his eleven months as hospital chaplain with Taylor's army at Matamoras, Mexico from 1846-47; then take into account the spirituality of his apostolate which was the "be all and end all" of his existence. And, finally, a word or two on "what manner of man" was John McElroy.

Much of Father McElroy's career subsequent to 1847 is adequately handled in David R. Dunigan's *A History of Boston College* (Milwaukee, 1947).

Our title is taken from a remark of Father Gilbert J. Garraghan: "Like a clerical Abraham Lincoln, devoid of the learning of the schools, but abounding in force of character, maturity of judgment and talent for affairs, he scored undoubted success in the cause of religion and of the Church. Like Lincoln, too, it may be added, he wrote a lucid and vigorous English" (*Thought* 17 (1942) 634).

The writer is greatly indebted to Father William Repetti, S.J., the archivist of Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., who introduced me to the diaries of Father John McElroy, and who was untiring in his efforts to unearth documents; to Father Edward Ryan, S.J. and his worthy assistants at the Woodstock Archives, Woodstock, Maryland, who unlocked a wealth of further diaries, letters and pertinent information and to Father Peter Rahill, archivist of the Diocese of Saint Louis, Missouri, for his gracious assistance in having had correspondence between Bishop Rosati and Father McElroy photostated for my convenience. To all other persons who were in any way helpful in compiling data for this narrative, I wish to express my most sincere thanks.

FATHER JOHN McELROY

Chapter I: The Immigrant Lay Brother

The Period from 1782 to 1806

John McElroy was born at Brookeborough, County Fermanagh, Ireland, on May 14, 1782. In the diaries and letters in his handwriting there are no entries or comments relating to his first twenty-one years. As his birth place is situated in what today is called Northern Ireland (Ulster), it may be assumed that his education was obtained the hard way, and that the practice of his religion was even harder; for during those years, just after the close of the American Revolution (1775-1782), Ireland was a seething cauldron in a "winter of discontent." Some future historian of McElroy's complete life may perhaps unearth the early years of this astute Irish immigrant, but for this story we will go on shipboard at Londonderry on June 25, 1803, when he sailed for the United States. The ocean voyage took two months, for he landed at Baltimore, Maryland, on August 25, 1803.

It seems obvious, both from later entries in his diaries and comments from Jesuits in years to come, that Father McElroy was gifted both with a keen business acumen and more than a passing knowledge of "numbers," while, at the same time, possessing a fine sense of English composition; all three qualities were to color his career as builder, pastor, and orator. He obtained a position in Baltimore as clerk in a general store. The following year, on August 25, 1804, he took up residence in Georgetown, Maryland, and began again as a clerk in a store owned and operated by a Mr. Curran. Here he remained until January 14, 1806. It was during these seventeen months that there came into John McEloy's life the germ of his future vocation. The parish church for the Incorporated Georgetown (Maryland Assembly, 1789) was Holy Trinity. (The original church, which McElroy attended, is now the Convent of The Sisters of Mercy on the parish grounds.) The eager young Irish immigrant, long starved for an opportunity to practice his religion openly, became a daily participant at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, received Holy Communion faithfully once a week and, perhaps to fill the gap of many Sundays

in Ireland when attendance was forbidden, stayed on for an extra Mass for good measure. According to the custom of the day, the sermon now so familiar to congregations, was rather an instruction, to be read slowly from the pulpit. It was these clear and concise explanations of the "way, the truth and the life," which first caused John McElroy to heed the call to a higher life and show himself responsive to the urging of the Master, "I have chosen you, you have not chosen me." In the McElroy correspondence in the Woodstock College Archives there is a series of these instructions in his own handwriting, but there is little to be found in his notes of any inspiration he might have received from them. However, as we shall dwell on his spiritual diaries later, there is no doubt that his mode of life was altered, and even before he began to work at Georgetown College he had instituted in his daily life the regimen of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises to the extent of daily examination of conscience, spiritual readings and one hour meditation.[1] The rough emerald from Ireland was beginning to be fashioned and polished until he shone as a gem among the stalwart Jesuits of his day.

McElroy began working as a layman at Georgetown College on January 14, 1806. Just what his official duties were the records do not disclose, but within a few months he was admitted into the Society of Jesus as a lay brother and the catalogue indicates that he was the buyer for the College, assisted in keeping the books in the Procurator's office, and gave instructions "in numbers" to the younger boys; and since he notes that ". . . my life did not undergo any great change . . .", we may assume he continued in the work already begun with the notable exception that now his daily chores and duties took on the added spiritual motivation and merit derived from the motto of the Jesuits—A.M.D.G. (Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam—All for the greater glory of God.) There is an oral tradition which has been handed down in the Maryland Province that the Superior of the College, Father Robert

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[1] *Spiritual Diaries 12.* Woodstock College Archives, Woodstock, Md. "Reflections and Resolutions—the effects of instructions from spiritual directions, taken down chiefly as they occurred in Holy Trinity Church —(noted the foregoing in Georgetown at Mr. Curran's Store), August 1, 1805."

Molyneux, S.J.,[2] was so impressed with the seriousness of this young man that in a spiritual colloquy he pointed out how much more gratifying to God and beneficial to his soul it would be were he to sanctify his daily actions in a religious state or vocation.

McElroy apparently heeded this suggestion, and on October 10, 1806, he was admitted to the Society of Jesus as lay brother. His entrance is noted in the Province Catalogue—"Novitii Coadjutores (Lay Brothers) Joannes McElroy et Patritius McLoughlin, a die 10 Octobris 1806, in Districtu Columbiae, Collegium Georgiopolitanum," and in his own words in a letter to Father Charles Stonestreet, S.J., written July 21, 1857:

> I entered the Society of Jesus as a Lay Brother, employed as clerk, procurator, treasurer, assistant cook, prefect (of rooms), teacher of writing and arithmetic, etc. In these duties was I occupied during the two years of Novitiate, often making my meditations the best I could going to market. . . .[3]

What was the physical appearance of John McElroy? Father Aloysius Jordan, for many years a personal friend, describes him as follows:

> A tall, wiry, thin, red-faced man with large features and black hair. He had a big mouth and spoke with a nasal twang, but slowly and distinctly.[4]

The choice souls who receive the divine call to follow the Master generally have a very small share of this world's goods. The Lord is not too interested in the amount or size of the gift. What He measures is the spirit with which both self and worldly possessions are committed to the cause. John McElroy with that businesslike precision which would mark his dealings during his days in the Society of Jesus, carefully wrote down what he was relinquishing, beside himself, in entering the Jesuit Society. He listed the following:

(1) Books—New Doway Testament, Instructions of Youth, But-

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[2] *Catalogues, Md. Prov.*, Georgetown Univ. Archives, R. P. Molyneux, S.J. appointed Superior of the Mission on June 1, 1805.

[3] *Woodstock Letters*, (hereinafter referred to as W. L.), 44 (1915) 9-10.

[4] *Record of American Catholic Historical Society.* (Philadelphia), 12, 217.

ler's *Lives of the Saints* (1 Volume), *Elevation of the Soul to God* (2 Volumes), Augustine's *Confessions, Devotion to Christ, Pious Guide, Pious Christian, Key of Paradise, Garden of the Soul, Vade Mecum,* Thomas à Kempis, *Spiritual Combat,* Huby's *Spiritual Retreat, Daily Exercises, Hymn Book, The Cross in Its True Light* (lent by Father Francis Neale, N.S.J., who had been pastor at Holy Trinity).

(2) Sundry articles of wearing apparel not necessary to describe in particular; also, silver watch chain and seal, looking glass, razor-shaving box, Hopkins razor strap, candlestick and snuffers, 2 combs, tooth brush, pair of scissors, penknife, 2 pairs of beads, Pewter Crucifix, a few pictures of different Saints, silver case containing some relics, pair of knee buckles, pocket book.

To the above list of articles he added:

"I resign my right and telle [sic] to my Superiors, prescribing for the future never to claim any property to them or anything else.
Nov. 12, 1806

John McElroy
Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.[5]

How many of the above mentioned books young McElroy brought from Ireland is not known, but a quick glance over the titles clearly indicates that he had surely given himself a workable library in matters spiritual, and that the later entries in his Diaries, commenting on how in his formative years he had spent many hours filling his eager soul with serious spiritual reading matter, are correct. And the Fathers who received him were doubtless very happy to add such works to the all too scantily stocked library of the new College. Another observation after reading over the list suggests that McElroy must have been well grounded in letters before embarking for the United States, or else he had used the few years on these shores to good advantage to supplement his education.

What impression did the young businessman, turned religious, make upon one with whom he came in daily contact—who now was an eye witness to his virtues and defects, his aspirations and inspirations—and who would help shape his destiny? Father Anthony Kohlmann (who later became a national figure in New York City over the question of "divulging matter heard in the confessional") was, at the time

[5] *W. L.* 44 (1915) 14.

of McElroy's admission to the Society, the Socius or Assistant Master of Novices. Father Kohlmann wrote to the Superior in White Russia, Father Brzozowski, on November 25, 1806:

> The names of the lay brothers are: John McElroy—aggressive, but none the less prudent, who gave up a splendid, lucrative position as merchant for the Kingdom of Heaven, and will be of great benefit to us.[6]

Here attention should be drawn to the fact that in the McElroy Diaries the entries are for the most part factual, and oftentimes lacking in both background and interpretation on the part of the diarist. Therefore, a certain amount of monotony is inevitable. Furthermore, the lack of an occasional anecdote, of descriptions of personalities (other than by name) and of local coloring, make it almost impossible not to inject a certain amount of hypothesis.

In Volumes 1 and 2 of the Diaries, now in the Georgetown University Archives, there is practically nothing touching on the mode of life in the years that Brother McElroy spent in the grade of coadjutor. While perusing these pages the thought occurred to me that those years might well have been entitled "the hidden life," following the Evangelist who summarized the thirty years in the life of Christ, "Having gone down to Nazareth, He was subject to them." No doubt, with the positions listed in the catalogue, plus the added necessity of grounding himself in the daily routine of a religious, such as, spiritual reading, daily Mass, meditation, examen of conscience, annual retreat—there was little time left for any writing other than that contained in his Spiritual Diaries, which are quite jejune.

British Attack on Washington, August, 1814

The most striking incident during these years occurred in August of 1814, when Brother McElroy was an eye witness to the burning of Washington by the British. This event and the raid on St. Inigoes Manor in Southern Maryland occupy a goodly portion of Diary I. Both of these historical vignettes have been reviewed previously (v.g., one by the present author in the *Georgetown Alumni Bulletin* of October, 1956)

[6] *Ibid.*, 35 (1906) 16. This is a translation.

so that it would be superfluous to burden the present story with a repetition of either. However, for the record, there is a very interesting collection of letters by a Brother Mobberly, who was the gardener at St. Inigoes Manor, describing the particulars of this invasion of Jesuit property and the final outcome; these letters are in the Georgetown University Archives under the title of "Mobberly Diaries." McElroy noted that Mobberly's account was copied by the "*National Intelligencer* and from thence copied by many other papers throughout the country."[7]

McElroy on Slavery

> January 29, 1814—This day, also, Isaac ran away from the College. January 30, 1814—This day Isaac was taken up in Baltimore and committed to jail. Rev. Fr. Neale [Francis Neale, S.J., 1786-1837] being there same time, sold him to a man in Hartford County.[8]

In these days of integration and racial tensions the above entry in Volume 1, pages 32-33, may come as a shock to the casual reader. It is obvious Isaac was a slave, owned by the Fathers at Georgetown College. Father Neale was Brother McElroy's Master of Novices, having entered the Jesuit Society as a secular priest on the very day of McElroy's entrance, October 10, 1806. Father Neale had been the pastor at Holy Trinity during McElroy's attendance there. Just what effect this traffic in human beings had on the man from Ireland cannot be ascertained, but we know from his diary, kept while making the trip to Mexico along the water route of the Mississippi in 1846, that he was pleasantly surprised by the apparent contentment of the bonded slaves and their mode of existence.

He has no word of criticism either for the "peculiar institution" or their masters. And even while pastor of St. John's at Frederick, Maryland, and of the adjoining mission stations, although he notes with joy the conversion to the Catholic Church of slaves and their obvious happiness at being received, he in no wise allows us an insight into his own personal reactions to slavery.

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[7] *Diaries of John McElroy* (Georgetown Univ. Archives) 1.
[8] *Ibid.*

Chapter II: Priest and Pastor
1817 - 1830

Yesterday, (May 31, 1817) the following persons received the Order of Priesthood in the College (Georgetown) from the hands of the Right Reverend Archbishop (Leonard) Neale, (Baltimore 1815-1817): Roger Baxter, S.J., John McElroy, S.J., Franklin and Timothy Ryan, seculars.[1]

On June 11, 1817, Father McElroy said his first Mass in the College Chapel. He noted in his *Diary I* on February 14, 1815, that the Superior, Father John Grassi, S.J., had received letters from England which enclosed a printed copy of the Pope's recent Bull for the re-establishment of the Society of Jesus.[2]

Here we come to our first problem, namely: what caused the Jesuit Superiors in the newly re-established Society in the United States to advance John McElroy from the status of Coadjutor to that of Scholastic with the ultimate goal of ordination to the sacred Priesthood?

There is an oral tradition that another Scholastic, overhearing McElroy instructing the boys in the lower form, was struck by his method of teaching, and went to Father Grassi, urging him to use this teacher's qualifications more extensively in the classroom and on the lecture platform. In the Society these functions are usually reserved to Scholastics and priests, and it would, therefore, be necessary to remove McElroy from the phalanx of the Lay Brothers. This could have been the initial step in the upgrading, but no research has uncovered any documentation.

Then, there is the testimony of a Fr. Finotti in a letter about McElroy:

> After Fr. Grassi became Superior of Georgetown (August 15 1812) he remarked how well Bro. McElroy conversed and one day told him to stand up on the porch of the old South Building and give a sermon *ex tempore* on a subject named . . . (presumably by Fr. Grassi).[3]

Again:

> Fr. Grassi was the Superior who perceived the latent powers of

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[1] *Diary, I.*

[2] Pope Pius VII's recent Bull entitled *"Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesia rum."*

[3] *W. L.*, 32 (1902) 205.

> the Lay Brother John McElroy and raised him to the position of a Scholastic, applied him to the study of theology and had him ordained in 1815 [1817] . . . His wisdom was shown by the subsequent career of McElroy, an apostolic man, one of the builders of the Catholic Church in the U. S.[4]

And, finally:

> Bishop Neale, then residing at the College, (Georgetown) recognized his (McElroy's) abilities, furnished him with the facilities for study and raised him to the Priesthood.[5]

The Catholic Church in the United States in those years suffered from an appalling lack of priests. The need was urgent, both in the educational and parochial fields, and, undoubtedly, neither superior nor Bishop hesitated a moment to to make full use of an individual like McElroy who had clearly shown that he was a man of exceptional talents. Fr. James Kilroy, S.J., of Boston College, who remembered some of the Fathers at the Novitiate at Frederick, Maryland, who had lived with Fr. McElroy, commented to the writer (June 1957):

> These Fathers understood from McElroy's contemporaries that he was an orator par excellence, always prominent for the vibrant resonance of his voice and the ease with which he could be heard by the congregations.

Perhaps it was this quality for which he became widely known later on, combined with the spiritual earnestness with which he was blessed in the religious life, which moved Fr. Grassi to take the step and give to the American Church an outstanding Jesuit priest of the nineteenth century. Then again, some men are given the extraordinary facility of perceiving greatness in others; Fr. Grassi, as superior of a small community, was in daily contact with Brother McElroy, supervising his activities and hearing his semi-annual manifestations of conscience as required by the Jesuit Rules.[6] It will never be known how in those colloquies McElroy bared his soul and gave Fr. Grassi the knowledge necessary to reach this important decision.

I do not believe there was either any one quality or any

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[4] *Ibid.*, 30 (1900) 103, "Reminiscences of Fr. Grassi, S.J."

[5] *Ibid.*, 33 (1903) 314.

[6] Fourth Common Rule, S.J.

single incident which persuaded Fr. Grassi in his final decision. Rather, it was a congeries: lack of priests, Fr. Grassi's keen insight into both the spirituality and talent of his subject, the ability of John McElroy as a teacher and orator, which caused the Jesuit Superior to advise McElroy to take this important step.

Scarcely had Fr. McElroy been ordained by Archbishop Leonard Neale, when he was called upon to witness the latter's death at the Georgetown Visitation Convent on June 17, 1817, as noted in the *Diary*:

> Archbishop Neale is taken suddenly ill. Fr. Grassi administered the last Sacraments. Fr. McElroy and Brother Henry Reiselman, Infirmarian, are appointed to sit up with him. . . . About 10 minutes past 1 A.M. he departs from life whilst Fr. McElroy was kneeling at his bed-side reading the departing prayers. Mother Louisa, Superioress and five Nuns, were present. Fr. McElroy said Mass in the Nuns' Chapel[7] about 2 o'clock for the repose of his soul.[8]

Reminiscing years later, McElroy said that:

> Bishop Neale was an admirable director of consciences and possessed, more than anyone else I ever knew, the powers of winning hearts to himself and God. His life even in his old age was as regular as a Novice's. He arose every morning at 4 A.M., made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament and his hour of meditation.[9]

From his ordination in 1817 until his transfer in 1822 to St. John's in Frederick, Maryland, Fr. McElroy continued as a faculty member at Georgetown College. He pronounced the final vows of a Spiritual Coadjutor on June 11, 1821 in the College Chapel. His acumen in the business world was greatly utilized, as we find him during these years listed as the "Procurator (treasurer) of the Mission," which was to become the future Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus. His talents as a teacher of mathematics continued to be of service in both upper and lower forms, while his preaching capacity was in great demand in the nearby Parish of Holy Trinity. On September 22, 1822; after 16 years 8 months and

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[7] Chapel of the Visitation Convent, Georgetown, D. C., where Archbishop Neale, S.J., is buried.

[8] *Diary 1*, 62.

[9] *Journal 3*, 90. (*Diaries* at Woodstock College are called *Journals* and will be so designated in subsequent pages.)

7 days, McElroy left Georgetown to assume his duties as Pastor of St. Thomas Manor, Calvert County, Maryland, and the adjoining congregations. Near Port Tobacco, Maryland, he met the Reverend Fr. Superior, S.J., [Charles Neale] at which time:

> . . . He informed me that my destination was changed and that I was to go to Charles Carroll's to live with the family as Chaplain—but he heard of the illness of Father Maleve and desired me to proceed thither in the interval—Said Mass at 2 A.M. at St. Patrick's, Washington—Stage at 3 for Frederick, arrived found Fr. Maleve dangerously ill.[10]

The old cliché about "for want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of the shoe the horse was lost," may be a bit out of order, but suppose Fr. Meleve had not been ill, and McElroy had become Chaplain to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, that doughty Founding Father, then in his eighty-fifth year, might have found in the Irish Priest—drawn together by their common ancestry and McElroy's characteristic yen for absorbing all knowledge possible of the new country he had made his own—a penman for recollections, anecdotes and tales of our historic struggle for freedom, which could have easily enriched our knowledge of the Signer of the Declaration of Independence and given us a rich lode of historical treasures. But divine providence decreed otherwise and we must leave "what might have been" in the realm of historical fantasies.

Father Maleve died within a few days and on October 17, 1822, John McElroy was appointed Pastor of St. John's Church, Frederick, Maryland, where he was to remain until August 27, 1845.

The original site of "Frederick Towne" was laid out in 1745 by Daniel and Patrick Dulaney. It was most probably named after Frederick Calvert, Sixth Lord Baltimore. Situated in one of the most beautiful and fertile valleys of the "Free State," the site was quickly seized upon by newly arrived immigrants from the German Palatinate, with a fair sprinkling of the same race from the City of Philadelphia. It became known even outside of the Maryland borders, when in 1775 a band of its citizens arrived in Boston, painted as Indians, and eager to cooperate against tyranny. The Towne

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[10] *Ibid. Journal 3.*

was incorporated by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1817, and when McElroy arrived its population was over 3,600. For pioneers moving West it was on the national highway, and was generally the first overnight stop out of Baltimore.[11]

St. John's Church (Chapel Alley and 2nd Street), whose new Pastor was John McElroy, had been begun in 1800, but the cornerstone was not laid until 1828. McElroy was destined to rebuild the church. The cornerstone of the new edifice was laid in 1833, and the consecration (the first in the United States) took place on April 26, 1837.

Connected with the parish church in Frederick there were many outlying mission stations. In the pages of his *Diaries* McElroy lists twelve such, which, during his pastorship of twenty-three years, he and his fellow Jesuits visited regularly. Here one may be allowed a bit of fancy and see the tall wiry priest, à la Lincoln, riding the church circuit rather than the judicial circuit. The missions were within about a hundred miles perimeter around Frederick, and from the number of actual entries in the *Diaries* I estimate that McElroy rode over ten thousand miles by horse or carriage, bringing the "good tidings" to the scattered faithful.

Fr. McElroy found the parish at Frederick in what he described as a "flourishing condition," and he is high in the praise of the priestly work of his dead predecessor, Fr. Maleve, S.J. He had hardly assumed his new position, when in the Diary we find the following:

> October 22, 1822: Messrs. Taney, Joseph Smith, Jameson and Atwood, the principal men of the congregation, dined with me. I proposed altering pews so as to accommodate black people and strangers, the [y] readily agreed.[12]

Roger Brooke Taney, later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, whose name will be forever linked with the Dred Scott Decision (1857), began a friendship with McElroy which was to last until the death of Chief Justice Taney in 1864. The juxtaposition of his name in this entry, with his approval of pews for the black people, could be called

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[11] *W. P. A. Guide for Maryland.* Cities are listed alphabetically.

[12] *Journal 3.* Woodstock Archives.

an ironic twist, since in his now famous opinion written for the majority of the Court in the Scott Decision, the Chief Justice denied that the black man was or could ever be a citizen of the United States. Evidently he did not draw any such color line when it was a question of divine worship, for even though the pews were segregated as was customary throughout the United States, he must have held to the belief that these also were God's children and destined to be citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

Chapter III: Ministry At Frederick

Father McElroy's priestly administrations while Pastor of St. John's, President of St. John's Academy, and Superior of the Jesuit Community, covers over 22 years of spiritual and temporal activities. As already noted, the pages of his *Diaries* during this period record his morning Mass, visits to the sick, instructions to converts, baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Now and then, a name of national or international importance flashes across the pages, but, unfortunately, McElroy never commented on the importance of the personages, or on his own reactions to their visits. General Lafayette arrived in Frederick on December 29, 1824, and the *Diary* states:

> General Lafayette arrived in town this evening escorted by a numberous military corps and great concourse of citizens—The town was handsomely illuminated on the occasion . . .[1]
>
> Dec. 30—Paid Gen'l. Lafayette a visit today at his lodgings—Merely passed civilities and retired.[2]

January 2, 1825, was a Sunday, and there is complete silence in the *Diary* as to whether the Revolutionary hero attended Mass. Another famous visitor of world-wide reputation was Madame Iturbide, wife of the deposed Emperor of Mexico.

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[1] *Journal 4.* Woodstock Archives.

[2] *Ibid.* General Lafayette was visiting Frederick as a guest of the Maryland Agricultural Society, "This Week" Magazine Section, Baltimore *Sunday Sun,* 9/29/57.

Her visit is noted in Journal 5, with the sole comment that she was "a most gracious lady." Bishops, especially those of the dioceses of St. Louis, Bardstown, and New Orleans, always stopped for a few days in Frederick, either on their way to, or returning from a Provincial Council in Baltimore or the *Ad Limina* visits to Rome. Even a casual reader of the Diaries and extent correspondence of McElroy in the Woodstock Archives gains the vivid impression that the *"pastores gregis"* of the United States—from Boston to New Orleans—considered John McElroy a friend and confidant well worth the nurturing.

As noted, the estimated population of Frederick at the time of McElroy's arrival was approximately 3600 souls. Taking into account that slaves were common, both in the rural and urban areas, we may perhaps estimate them in round numbers of about 300. Some must have been Catholics, as is seen in the resolution to obtain pews for their use; but it is safe to assume that the majority were not. Taking into account that the actual number of white Catholics is not given in any of the *Diaries,* and knowing that Frederick Towne had been largely settled by Protestants of German origin, the majority of the population must have been Lutheran. However, we know that both the Methodists and the Presbyterians had prosperous churches in the town; I would estimate the number of Catholics to have been about 600. This is based on a statistical entry in *Journal 3,* which gives the number of those who made their Easter duties in 1822 as 513. In the same tabulation, covering an eight-month period, May 1822 to January 1823, the number of confessions listed is 2,524 and Holy Communions 2,295. The First Communion class numbered 54, those confirmed 185, those baptized 124.

Father McElroy was assisted in the ministry in these early years by priests of the Society sent up from Georgetown College, or by those members of the clergy who visited him in transit. He also obtained occasional assistance from Mount St. Mary's College at Emmitsburg, Maryland. This College always held a very special place in McElroy's affection, and he was practically the spiritual Father to the faculty, generally giving the annual retreat to the students, and often

going there when he felt in need of a rest. This is also why he was able so often to visit his mission stations, knowing the faithful in Frederick were in good hands.

He had scarcely taken over the pastorship at St. John's when he turned his attention to what he called "a most pressing need," namely, the making of converts. That his efforts were abundantly rewarded is evident from the few statistics found in his writings. Between October 1822 and December 1825 he listed 164 converts, and, as we shall note during his chaplaincy in the Mexican War, his *Diaries* are filled with the conversions of soldiers in the hospital at Matamoras, Mexico. Still a further note in *Journal* 20A states, "Suppose in all 8 years [1831] about 280 converts."

Two rather striking entries are worth quoting:

> 1822—Sally a colored woman about 17, belonging to Mr. Key [Francis Scott] . . . Baptized her conditionally, heard her confession and gave her Extreme Unction . . . Died next day. I buried her in our ground [St. John's Cemetery] at which about 400 colored and other persons attended . . .
>
> 1823—Edward Smith, colored man about 20 years old—called about noon—The Presbyterian Parson had been with him, but [Smith] was not satisfied with him—sent for me—I confessed and baptized him and administered Holy Communion. He died before I left the house.

The above quotations show deathbed conversions, but any priest who has instructed new members of the Church can readily appreciate the numberless hours required to impart the dogmas and moral teaching necesary for the reception of the Sacraments. When one recalls the almost endless journeys and continual parochial activities of Father McElroy, the time consumed in giving the instructions, even for the numbers listed, surely merits for his ministry in this field the accolade of "maker of converts."

High in the category of "firsts" which must be associated with the name of John McElroy is the establishment of spiritual retreats for parishes. The first mention of such exercises for St. John's Parish is in *Journal 5* dated April 10, 1827. This was the Tuesday of Holy Week, and from then on these became the customary procedure. McElroy believed that the combining of the sacred liturgy in the most significant

week of the Catholic year would be an opportune time to instruct the faithful in the solemnity of the services, along with the making of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. The *Journal* states:

> April 10, 1827—This evening commenced the exercises of the retreat for the congregation—as announced on Sunday. . . . Meditation morning and evening . . . Spiritual reading twice a day.
> April 13,—Mass and instructions—A.M. Reading and examen at noon. Meditation and Vocal prayers in the evening.

In *Journal 12,* under date of February 14, 1842, we find him giving the first public retreat in Baltimore City at St. Vincent's Church:

> Mass 6 A.M. Points for meditation. Another Mass—Review of meditation. 10 A.M.—Spiritual lecture. 11 A.M.—Family Instruction. 12 Noon—Angelus. 3 P.M.—Thomas à Kempis, Rosary and Instruction. Confessions 7 P.M. Second Instruction, Benediction and night prayers—Finished at 9 P.M.

As to the spiritual results of the last entry he noted "over 800 Communions on Sunday the 20th, church filled to capacity and the services of eight confessors were required." Surely, consideration must be given in commenting on his parochial retreats that our forefathers were stalwart men and women, attending church for almost fifteen hours with, of course, the necessary intervals. Nothing in his priestly life gave more consolation to John McElroy than these retreats, and from the comments of bishops, secular priests, and his fellow Jesuits, the oratorical prowess of McElroy, prescinding from the Divine Grace necessary for all supernatural actions, played a large part in their success. I have been unable to discover any written sermons in the Archives at Woodstock. He could well have spoken from notes or from memory, but judging from his methodical business records and church accounts, I assume he must have written out his sermons. Two qualities in the various comments listed stand out to illustrate both the popularity and depth of his preaching. Naturally gifted with a superb voice ("booming" is one description of it) McElroy never had any difficulty being heard in the largest churches in which he preached. People in those days were accustomed to long Sunday sermons, as generally there were only two parish Masses, which ordinarily were

quite sufficient in taking care of the needs of the congregation. At St. John's there were two Masses—one at eight and one at ten o'clock. Fr. McElroy more often officiated at the former. All the novenas—Sacred Heart, Immaculate Conception, Holy Souls, and the Novena of Grace—were preached year after year, and he apparently delighted in conducting them for his flock.

And as his reputation grew he was continually called upon by other pastors and bishops for what is today termed the "occasional sermon." On these occasions his magnificent voice could be heard from "Boston to St. Louis." Characteristically, Fr. McElroy merely noted his appearances; his power and effectiveness must be gleaned from the many accounts in the *Woodstock Letters*. But it was the second quality of his sermons which left behind the indelible mark of his greatness and that, briefly, was their content. McElroy was not an intellectual giant, and because of the paucity of his formal theological training some have concluded that he was deprived of the Rectorship of Georgetown College in 1845.[3]

In his infrequent spare moments he read and studied approved authors in the theological field of writing and kept abreast of the current Catholic literature. While his instructions were simple and clear and his sermons lucid, it must not be assumed that he lacked all literary embellishments. His letters, written to sundry persons on a multiplicity of topics, are distinguished, as Father Garraghan noted, by the same lucidity of style and content for which Abraham Lincoln has taken his place among the classical English luminaries. Contrary to popular belief, there is very little or no humor in McElroy. The *Diaries* totally lack the pun, the quip, the joke, and his letters did not reveal any flashing wit. This is rather unique, because contemporary accounts of his conversations —especially at community recreation among his fellow Jesuits —point out that he was a sparkling and witty talker. As

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[3] *Journal 16*, Woodstock Archives: "June 9, 1845—Father Visitor [Fr. Kenney] told me this morning that I am to be Rector of Georgetown College with the next scholastic year—*Fiat Voluntas Dei.*" "August 3—I must be at the College on the 20th inst. to assume office of Rector." "August 28—Received a letter from Father Visitor informing me that I am not to be Rector of Georgetown College."

in the case of all great orators, Father McElroy improved with experience and left behind him in the affections of his hearers the reputation of being "the orator of the day."

Father McElroy was also quite civic minded and participated in the celebrations which marked the advancement of Frederick Towne. The most notable of these functions occurred on:

> December 1st, 1831. On this day by appointment the cars carrying the President and Directors of the Railroad Co. [Baltimore and Ohio] arrived for the first time in Frederick—their arrival was greeted by the firing of cannon—ringing of bells, bands of music. The citizens received the Company, the Governor of Maryland [George Howard] and a number of invited guests and escorted them in procession to the Hotel. I walked in the procession, the only clergyman but did not dine with them—Much good is expected to grow out of this line [the railroad]—It is the largest in the world 61 miles and in a few weeks it will be completed to Point of Rocks, Md.[4]

The railroad was completed,—not as McElroy noted "in a few weeks,"—but by 1832, for a total distance of 69 miles.

The Sixth Annual Report of the President and Directors of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company stated that,

> . . . The Board cannot forbear on this occasion to notice the kind and hospitable reception given them by the people of Frederick. . . .

and Edward Hungerford in his "Baltimore and Ohio Railroad"[5] writes:

> On 1st December 1831, when the first regular train went rolling into Frederick to a tremendous reception . . . A huge decorated arch had been erected over the railroad tracks . . . All Frederick was gaily decorated . . . The chimes of the new Catholic Church were ringing.

Perhaps Hungerford had the cue as to why Fr. McElroy did not attend the reception when he stated: ". . . A mighty dinner of two hundred covers is served . . . consuming four long

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[4] The President and Directors of the railroad who made up the party were: Philip E. Thomas, President, Charles Carroll, William Patterson, Alexander Brown, John Morris, George Hoffman, Alexander Fridge, Patrick MacCaulay, John McKim, Jr., Evan Elliot and James Swan.

[5] B. & O. RR. Archives, Employees Library, Balto., Md. Vol. I, p. 124-125.

hours." He would not have relished sitting for four hours listening to endless toasts and speeches.

Not all of Fr. McElroy's dealings with the citizens of Frederick were on the same jovial plane occasioned by the arrival of the railroad. His Diary notes reveal that the "ugly head of religious bigotry" had been reared and that he intended to "do something about it."[6]

> April 18, 1830—Lectured this evening, a conference on "Slander," in reply to an article in the Lutheran Intelligencer of this town against the Catholic Church—Read them [the charges] and refuted them.
>
> April 25—Reviewed the same publication—A great crowd of people. Church could not contain them.
>
> May 3—. . . . Another large crowd. Three-quarters of them I presume are Protestants. Preached 1 hour 20 minutes.[7]

There seems little reason to doubt that McElroy's Irish heart was profoundly stirred. Born and bred in a land of persecution and an atmosphere of religious intolerance, this son of Erin—now a full blown believer in the American way of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"—must have sounded the tocsin of alarm against what most probably were old skeletons taken from the closets by the opponents of the Church. It was the age of Maria Monk, the Know-Nothings, and the juicy words "scandal" and "slander" were always sure of a good audience.

It was also the age when political debates were the order of the day, and when religious controversy was an added ingredient. One need not take too much liberty with the text to imagine that the "three-quarters of Protestants" were attracted by both curiosity and McElroy's eloquence. The statement, "read them and refuted them," certainly summarizes what he thought of the hoary charges, and he was no doubt satisfied that the refutation would lay to rest their empty tirades.

In *Journal 15* under January 19, 1843, there is recorded a rather ironic incident. An itinerant preacher by the name of Moffet made his appearance in a Methodist Meeting House to which he was escorted by a procession of Freemasons. He

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[6] *Journal 7*, Woodstock Archives.

[7] *Ibid.*

had been around Frederick Towne for some weeks, but this was his big day. McElroy does not mention whether or not he attacked the Catholic Church. If Moffet followed the customary routine of the day and age, he most certainly did—but McElroy related:

> . . . This alarmed the Lutherans and Presbyterians . . . They sounded the alarm with the ringing of bells and summoned their people to their own conventicles to secure them from the contamination of the Methodists!

In the late eighteen-twenties and early thirties work was being pushed for the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, which was to connect Washington with the West. Actually, the financial panic of 1837 halted the construction and the operation was carried only as far as Cumberland, Maryland.[8] By June, 1830, the operation was at Seneca, Maryland, on the Potomac River, some twenty-five miles West of Frederick. Since most of the laborers were Irish immigrants, McElroy felt duty-bound to see to their spiritual necessities. The entries are in *Journal 7*, and cover the dates of June 3, 1831 to August 15, 1831. Some excerpts are significant:

> June 3, 1831—Went to live at the Canal [Seneca] . . . Heard confessions all day in the woods . . . Preached at 7 P.M.
>
> June 4.—Said Mass, about 200 laborers attended. I preached for them again.
>
> June 18.—To confess the Canallers.
>
> June 19.—Heard confessions all day.
>
> June 25.—Lodged in a shantee [shanty] all night.
>
> Sept. 19.—Made a collection for the distressed Canallers about 90 dollars.
>
> April 22, 1831—I went this day to Monocacy [Md.] to prepare a new temporary chapel for the Canallers.
>
> Aug. 15, 1831—Called upon by the superintendent of the Railroad this evening to accompany him to New Market [Va.], where the Irish and Blacks had a quarrel. Happily I succeeded in making peace. President and Directors expressed their gratitude with a gift of $100.

These are skeleton entries of what must have consumed much time and energy, as these trips were invariably made by horseback. It is not difficult to picture the happiness of

[8] Billington, Roy A., *Western Expansion*, p. 337.

the Irish laborers in seeing a priest, one of their very own, so anxious about their salvation, acting the part of the peacemaker.

Having also to participate in the world of business which for centuries has been the great burden of the parish priests, McElroy is shown from the records, both in the *Diaries* and his meticulous accounting for the annual revenues at St. John's, to have been a businessman of no small account. Pastor during the two national depressions of 1827 and 1837, with a relatively small rural congregation, he built a new church, an orphan asylum, a girls' grammar school, a boys' academy, a novitiate, and the Visitation Convent during his pastorship, and in 1842, after a tenure of twenty years, he listed his debts as $12,163.63. McElroy was the recipient of three substantial sums of money—two left by will, and a third by what certainly was a unique business deal; for we find in *Journal 6* under date of April 4, 1829:

> Miss Elizabeth Dehaulme departed this life this morning at 3½ o'c in the 86th year of her age. R.I.P. She bequeathed by will her property amounting to about $5000 in bank to Father McElroy for certain purposes.

There is no itemization of just what the "certain purposes" were, but since the date corresponds with the expansion of the girls' school and the beginning of the boys' academy, it can be assumed that the pious lady's generous benefaction was quickly utilized.

The second gift by will came from none other than McElroy's brother who died as a Scholastic in the Society of Jesus at Georgetown in May of 1841.

> May 12—Called to Georgetown . . . Anthony ill with kidney trouble.
> May 17—(Forgot to enter this) Death of my brother . . . 56 years old, having spent 22 years in America.
> May 24—Signed papers as executor to my brother's will.[9]

The amount left by Anthony was about $3000. He had arrived in the United States in 1819, and following his older brother's footsteps had become a businessman in "George Towne." He entered Georgetown College in 1833 and the Society of Jesus in 1835. His name appears in *Journal 3* un-

[9] *Journal 10.*

der the dates of April 23-28, December 28, 1823, August 5 and 17, 1824, with the only comment "visited by my brother." I could find no letters between the two brothers in the McElroy correspondence folders in the Woodstock Archives. Father McElroy stated that he would "use the $3000 to pay off various debts in Frederick." It may seem strange to read that one Jesuit was able to leave his money to another, even his own brother. Anthony McElroy was still in the formative period of the Order, with simple vows, and property owned by him was his to dispose of, with the suggestion of his superiors that it be used for the greater glory of God. Since from the records we do not know of any other relatives of the two brothers either here or in Ireland, what was more natural than for Anthony to leave his worldly possessions to his priest-brother John, who was most certainly spending himself and all his possessions in the tireless spreading of God's kingdom at Frederick and wherever else his eager footsteps hastened in the zealous fulfillment of his apostolic duties.

The third benefaction noted in the diaries needs to be quoted in full:

> June 24, 1830. Concluded an arrangement with John L. Atwood and wife today to this effect: they are to convey all their property and personal (belongings) valued at $3000 to me—and I oblige myself to support them during life with Board and Lodging and pay them $100 per annum, to provide them with clothes etc.—At the demise of either, the annuity to be $75 per annum—They are to board and lodge with the Sisters of Charity. Modified the above so as to leave them possession of their slaves, thus releasing me from the payment of $100 a year.[10]

One could call this business deal unique, and so it was. First of all, Jesuits are forbidden by their rules to "enter into any business deal however pious without proper permission of superiors . . . because business deals are foreign to our institute . . . they are to be avoided" (Common Rule No. 39). There is no mention in the diary of the necessary permission, but knowing McElroy's constant observance of the letter and spirit of the Constitutions of his Order, it is surely safe to assume he had already obtained it before making this entry. Again, there is little doubt that it was pious. Most probably

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[10] *Journal* 7.

Mr. and Mrs. Atwood were an elderly couple who wished to spend their declining days amid the peace and quiet of the Convent conducted by the Sisters who were also conducting McElroy's orphanage and girls' school. The really unique portion is about the slaves. How many were there? What would McElroy have done with them? And do the words "releasing me from the payment of $100 a year" cancel out the other remark "pay them $100 per annum?" Certainly there were two or more bonded Negroes. It is doubtful John McElroy would have given them their freedom simply because he was a Jesuit, because Negro slaves were employed by the Jesuits in Maryland on their farms and in their residences. As to the second point, it seems that the return of the slave property to the Atwoods released McElroy from the annual payment of one hundred dollars a year previously agreed upon. Even so, it remains a most unique arrangement.

Always the practical businessman, he notes in *Journal 16* that "many fires (two near the Church) having had the smell of incendiarism," caused him to have the entire establishment insured for $31,000, for which he paid the premium of "$130, and the Sisters (of Charity) $16.80," with this final observation, "still we rely on the same beneficent Providence who has preserved us the last 22 years past . . . may His name be blessed—Dec. 21, 1844."

In 1842, from May to September, the Superior of the Vice Province of Maryland, Francis Dzierozynski, S.J., wishing to use the keen business sense of Father McElroy sent him on a trip through the counties of Charles and Saint Mary's in Southern Maryland. The primary object was to interview the tenant farmers who were working for the Jesuits, listening to their complaints and noting their suggestions. On St. George's Island (St. Mary's County, Md.) he noted valuable wood rotting and decided to sell it by the cord per acre. The trip took him, according to *Journal 16,* through St. Inigoes Manor, Newtown, St. Thomas Manor, Piney Point, Cedar Point, and as far north as Whitemarsh. The Superior also had in view the idea of making McElroy Procurator, of what would become in 1845 the Province of Maryland. There is no hint as to whether or not the trip was successful.

To close out the account of this business-like priest's activities, no better examples of his dealings with the trades people of his day could be cited than the two entries in *Journal 10.*

> Jan. 15, 1841—Paid up all my bills, determined in the future to pay grocer and drygoods bill every month; as also all others—So frequently absent last year that my affairs are somewhat out of order. Jan. 22, 1841—Have succeeded in paying all my merchant bills of every kind . . . I preferred doing this and paying even a little more interest than expose the credit of the house. . . .

And for the record, as part of the active ministry in the years at Frederick, notice should be taken of Father McElroy's part in the Fourth Provincial Council held in the metropolitan see of Baltimore in May of 1840. He is listed in the official records[11] as "Reverend Mr. John McElroy, S.J., chosen theologian by the Bishop of Cincinnati," (John Baptist Purcell). Both he and the Bishop were lodged at "The Eutaw House" which Baltimore chroniclers like to recall as the "last word in hostelries." The Council opened on May 17th and closed on the 24th. Bishop John England of Charleston, S. C., gave both the opening and closing sermons of the Council, but the only comment in the *Diary* is that "it was very solemn." In 1847 Bishop Benedict Flaget of Louisville, Kentucky, placed in nomination for the coadjutorship of his diocese Father McElroy, then in his sixty-fifth year. Writing to his brother-Bishop, John Fitzpatrick of Boston, Bishop Flaget comments:

> I think this Clergyman (McElroy) well qualified for the episcopacy . . . Members of the clergy hold him in much veneration since he once preached to them the spiritual retreat . . . For myself, personally, he will be the man of all my confidence.[12]

Even though subsequently Father McElroy was never "raised to the purple" he certainly must have, during the Council of 1840, made a lasting impression upon the chief pastors of the flock. Bishop Purcell writing in June 1848 to Dr. Cullen, Prefect of Propaganda in Rome, noted that "Bishop Flaget

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[11] *Councils of Baltimore, 1829-1849,* (John Murphy & Co., Balto. 1851) p. 163.

[12] McElroy Papers, Woodstock, Md., under "Bishops Correspondence."

expressed a preference for Fr. McElroy" but added that "Bishop Flaget did not know Father McElroy was in his 60th year."[13]

Chapter IV: Builder and Educator

Father McElroy built a new church at St. John's in Frederick, the cornerstone of which was laid in 1833, and the consecration took place in 1837. It was modeled on the Jesuit Church in Dublin, Ireland; the latter being dedicated to St. Francis Xavier. It was the largest edifice dedicated to the worship of God between Baltimore, Maryland, and Saint Louis, Missouri. It stands at 116 East Second Street. Within the past year the present pastor, Father Hogan, completed the renovation of the facade, but when you have crossed the threshold, except for the necessary repairs, you are gazing upon the temple of God as it came from the loving hands of the priest-builder Father John McElroy. The church remained under the direction of the Jesuits until 1903. The "WPA" *Maryland Guide* describes the church as follows: "St. John's Roman Catholic Church is a cruciform building of stuccoed masonry ornamented with Quoins and Ionic pilasters. It has an open tower somewhat in the style of Christopher Wren."[1] The guide book obviously is in error when it notes that "the cornerstone was laid in 1828." In memory of the builder there is today in the rear of the church near the baptistry a large oil painting of Father McElroy.

I secured from the Archives of the Saint Louis Archdiocese a series of letters written by Father McElroy to the Bishop of St. Louis, Joseph Rosati, almost the entire contents of which concern themselves with the building of St. John's Church. Bishop Rosati had just completed the Cathedral of St. Louis

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[13] Papers relating to "The Church in America"—Portfolio of the Irish College Rome 5 Series—quoted in "*American Catholic Historical Records*," Vol. 8, p. 502.

[1] Sir Christopher Wren, 1632-1723, English architect designer of St. Paul's, London, England.

in his episcopal city, and McElroy was more than anxious to obtain helpful suggestions and minute details so that he could incorporate them into his own plans for St. John's. (On a visit to the old Cathedral in December 1956, I quickly saw the parallelisms between it and Saint John's, especially the width of the sanctuaries, the lack of pillars, and the balcony arrangement.) Mr. Shannon, master plasterer, was sent by Bishop Rosati to Frederick to supervise the final touches to the church.

McElroy took an active part in the construction of another church. This time it was the building of the third church of Old Saint Joseph's in Willing's Alley, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the year was 1837. At the Seminary of St. Charles Borromeo, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, after promising the archivist, Father Bartholomew Fair, that I would use this one quotation only, I was lent the very controversial diary of Father Aloysius Jordan, S.J. It is in manuscript and is entitled "History of Old Saint Joseph's." On page 196 is the following entry:

> . . . the Venerable Father John McElroy who had just built the fine church of St. John's in Frederick City was substituted for Father Ryder[2] in the building of St. Joseph's. He brought Mr. John Tehan from Frederick to act as architect and somewhat altered the plans of Mr. John Darrogh. For the better . . .[3]

The Orphanage

Perhaps no building enterprise was closer to John McElroy's heart than the orphanage he built in Frederick. Actually, the *Diary* entries reveal but meager details, but knowing the man's great charity it is safe to assume that this Christlike action was in his mind of prime importance. There is no information as to whether he admitted Negro orphans, but the mores of the day and of the area would certainly have frowned on this, so I presume the orphans, both male and female, were white children.

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[2] Father James Ryder, S.J., entered the Society of Jesus in 1815, was Rector of Georgetown University in the 1850s and officiated at the wedding of General William T. Sherman.

[3] The diary of Rev. P. A. Jordan, S.J., in a bound volume entitled *The History of Old Saint Joseph's.* Archives St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Overbrook, Pa.

In *Journal 3*,[4] under various dates in January of 1827, we read:

> Jan. 1.—Suggested a subscription for the increase of orphans at the school, suggested 6 cents to a dollar according to circumstances . . . . After Mass subscriptions amounted to $60—Concluded in consequence to take three more destitute children.
> Jan. 7—Put an invitation in the papers[5] to contribute to the support of our orphan asylum. Solicited the aid of Colonel McPherson for aid for the orphan asylum, he agreed to furnish me with flour from his mill for this year.
> Jan. 31.—Received during this month for the orphan asylum $18.75 in money, 3 wagon loads and 1 cart load of wood, flour and some tea, sugar and coffee; acknowledged it in the papers.[6]

In 1830 McElroy began the building of the orphanage proper, a building fifty feet by thirty-nine feet, costing approximately $4,000. It was on Chapel Street adjoining the girls' school. He noted that some of the labor of construction was gratuitous, though he had on hand from the freewill offerings of both his congregation and of the townspeople over $2,000.

> Nov. 20, 1830—This evenin [sic] at 3 o'clock had the foundation of the new orphan asylum prepared—Assembled the scholars of both (male and female) schools in the Church—I spoke on blessing and placing the cornerstone, followed by procession . . . All over by five, a fine day.[7]

That is the last formal entry about his beloved orphans, but casual references occur in the other *Journals* until his departure in 1845 to assume his appointment as Pastor of Holy Trinity in Washington, D. C.

Frederick Free School

The establishment of a free school for females was, for the times, one of the most startling of Father McElroy's innovations. In the early nineteenth century America, free schools —except in the New England States—were a very scarce

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[4] *Journal 3*, Woodstock Archives.

[5] The papers then published in Frederick, Md., were:

(a) *Frederick Town Herald*, founded June 19, 1802 by John P. Thompson, and after 1814 called the *Public Advertiser*.

(b) The *Political Examiner* founded August 9, 1813, by Samuel Barnes.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Journal 7*, Woodstock College Archives.

commodity and almost entirely for the male population. The members of the fairer sex were to be seen and not heard; if they were heard, most of the conversation was supposed to be centered around sewing, cooking and homemaking and not about reading, writing and arithmetic. Female academies or seminaries were in existence across the States, but they were very exclusive and attended by the well-to-do. This educational situation is handled in a very scholarly manner by Carman and Syrett in their two volume work entitled *A History of the American People.*[8] One clarification must be added here about the use of the word "free" in the title. Actually, tuition and other expenses were charged to those who could afford to pay them. What "free" meant in those days was that a school was open to all and that those unable to pay would be given an education as far as the annual revenues allowed. Since McElroy was to receive State aid to run his Female Boarding School, I believe he must have used these amounts plus contributions to carry the burden of nonpaying pupils.

The formal opening of the school took place on January 3, 1825. The teachers were two Sisters of Charity from St. Joseph's College at Emmitsburg, Maryland, who had arrived on December 23, 1824. The Sisters' names were Margaret and Rosalia. The faculty was increased to seven by the time of the opening, but no names were given of the five new arrivals. The number of students is listed at forty-three with the notation "many more are expected." In the local papers an advertisement listed among the subjects to be taught: "reading, writing and needle work . . . all denominations will be admitted." By 1826 the number of students had increased to 160, and the curriculum now included "arithmetic . . . geography, Old and New Testament reading."[9] In 1841, according to *Journal 11,* the number had risen to 182, including sixty-one boarders who paid, twenty-one orphans who did not, and one hundred day scholars most of whom did not pay, while the course of studies now included history, English and Greek, botany and natural philosophy.

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[8] Carman and Syrett, *A History of the American People,* (2 vols., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), Vol. I, Chap. X, pp. 253-258.

[9] *Op. cit., Journal 5.*

The impact of this novel experiment, though somewhat slow in registering, caused the Protestant population to react somewhat unfavorably, for we read in *Journal 4:*

> January 2, 1829—This day a new free school commenced in the town for females under the auspices of different sects . . . They endeavor to withdraw all the [y] can from our school. A few have left us, say 8 or 10.

A curious citation, evidently from one of the local papers, is added: "Beware of the She-wolves, they want to kidnap your children, especially a Mr. Schaeffer." Now this is a puzzler. Is McElroy quoting some town bigot? Are the good Sisters the "she-wolves?" And how did "Mr. Schaeffer" come into the picture? No Jesuit by that name is listed in the Community at Frederick at this time. The rival school certainly did not sound the death knell for the girls' school, nor were Protestants unwanted pupils, for we read (*Journal 11,* August 4, 1841) that,

> . . . Various denominations are in attendance, all learn our catechism, several Protestant boarders received premiums for catechism.

In these days of ours when so much controversy has arisen on the separation of church and state, the use of public funds for the welfare of parochial school children, the use of buses for transportation to and from Catholic schools, etc., Fr. McElroy's entries under various dates in *Journal 5* make interesting reading. Herein he discusses the various steps taken in 1826 to obtain funds from the State Legislature at Annapolis to help finance his Free Female School.

> Jan. 10. Forwarded to the Legislature of the State (Md.) soliciting a part of the school fund[10] for the support of our school . . . to a Mr. Barnes [no doubt a member of the House of Delegates from Frederick].
>
> Jan. 25—Bill passed by the House . . .
>
> Feb. 17—Letter from Mr. Barnes verifying the above . . .
>
> June 13—Waited on the Levy Court.[11] The Court passed an order to authorize the President of the Court [Chairman] to draw from the school fund of Frederick City on the Treasury of Maryland . . .

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[10] The school fund was apportioned to the Counties per school population.

[11] Committee set up by the Legislature to handle distribution of appropriated funds.

and when received to pay me one-half of the portion coming to Frederick for St. John's Female School.

Aug. 3—Levy Court made distribution of the School Fund. One-half for female school, I received, the other half for the General Free School. Several directors of this school proposed placing the whole fund ($700) in my hands, believing that it is misapplied in giving it to the other school, where the pupils had made little progress, however they thought it better not to excite animosity among the members [of the board of directors] so it was not formally proposed.

Aug. 8—This day received the above donation of $350.17.[12]

Evidently the law makers at Annapolis believed McElroy had initiated a worthwhile public service; there is no mention of opposition to the enactment of the bill. The title of the other free school "General" leads me to believe that here is meant not the denominational school spoken of before, but what must have been the Frederick Public School. At any rate, these gentlemen must have thought the monies would be in safer hands when handled by McElroy, either because previous funds had been misused, or because McElroy's supervision of the money would lead to greater progress of the students.

The only remaining comments to be made from the *Diaries* —though the rare mention of graduates' names[13] leaves something to be desired—are, first, that several of the young ladies went on to college at Emmitsburg and finally entered the Sisters of Charity; and second, that in 1846 the Sisters of Charity were replaced by the Visitation Nuns whose school in Frederick is still flourishing today. The Reverend Mother there told me (Summer, 1956) that love and gratitude toward Father McElroy are cherished traditions.

St. John's Institute for Males

When we recall that he had been deprived of a formal education in his native Ireland, and had had little or no classroom training in the twenty-two months during which he prepared for the Sacred Priesthood, it is an amazing tribute to John McElroy's foresight that, busy as he was as Pastor of St. John's and at least seven surrounding parishes, he was such

[12] *Journal 5*, 1826, Woodstock Archives.

[13] Two names are given as having entered the Convent at Emmittsburg namely, Ann Fitzgerald and June Hull. *Journal 5*, Sept. 21, 1827.

a success in the field of education. In addition to the Free Female School, he erected and conducted what amounted to a preparatory school and college for boys in Frederick. Indeed in 1850 St. John's Institute was a worthy rival of the first foundation of the Jesuits in the United States—Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.[14]

It all began on November 3, 1829—(*Journal 6*) :

> This morning at 9 o'clock the scholars intended for the male school assembled in the new building [now the rectory of St. John's Parish, Frederick, Md.] with their parents and some visitors—The number of boys was 42—I read the rules after an introductory discourse—The whole lasted about an hour—Went to the Church had the *Veni Creator*—Returned, boys seemed very orderly.

The cornerstone of the school building had been laid on August 7, 1828 at seven P.M. It was blessed with appropriate ceremonies in the presence "of a few citizens." On October 2, 1829 Father McElroy screened the prospective students because, as we shall know from a long address at graduation a few years later, he stressed the purpose of the school as a "maker of scholars and not a rest house." The first faculty consisted of Mr. Curley, S.J., teacher of English, who was the first Jesuit to pronounce his vows at Frederick (Sept. 28, 1829), Mr. Kelly, S.J., also of the English Department, while Father Peters, S.J., taught Latin and French, and McElroy further noted, "he keeps the studies and assists in recreation." The phrase "he keeps the studies" gives the impression that he was Prefect of Studies and that he supervised the study hall.

The number of students attending St. John's grew rapidly, and on November 3, 1830 he noted "in this term 113 boys have been received, more than two-thirds Protestants." It would appear from this entry that the uproar caused by the opening of the girls' school had subsided and that the sturdy burgesses of Frederick, mostly of German extraction, were willing to entrust "the future hope of the nation" to the sons of Ignatius Loyola.

Following the custom of the Jesuit European schools, Thursday was the weekly holiday, a custom which prevailed in the Maryland Province up to recent years. Another Jesuit

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[14] Article by Father J. J. Ryan, S.J. *W. L.* 30, 231.

custom, gnarled with tradition, was the monthly reading of marks, for we learn from *Journal 6* for November 26, 1829:

> . . . This day is set apart for reading notes of conduct, study, etc. (the last Tuesday in each month). I read them in the presence of the Masters and all the scholars. I also read the rules at the same time.

Now let us take a look at a typical graduation exercise entered in *Journal 7*, under the date of July 26, 1831.[15]

> Commencement at 3 o'clock. Cards of invitation had been sent to the most respectable Gentlemen of the town. [No mention of Ladies!] They attended very generally with very few exceptions—The audience was very respectable, all seemed delighted and edified at the performance of the scholars—The exercise lasted four hours—A good band of music in attendance.

The order of exercises was the usual one: papers read, poems recited, premiums distributed with the usual interspersal of musical numbers.

Father McElroy tried to secure from the Maryland Legislature an appropriation for the Institute. He contacted a lawyer in Baltimore named Mr. Jenkins, a Congressman named Mr. Thomas and a State Legislator named Mr. Sappington, but it seemed to no avail, as there are no entries of money paid except to the female school. Most probably the delegates at Annapolis could not stretch the purse strings quite that far, and they viewed the Institute as a private school.

Shortly after the school began boarders were accepted with the understanding that the prospective pupils would be placed in good Catholic homes with strict supervision by adults. From the names of the families listed it would appear that Father McElroy placed his young charges among the faithful in the city, for we find such names as Boone, Brady, Donnelly, McKeonan and Tehan. There was a common study hall, and Mass was said daily for the students in the Parish Church. The Institute was incorporated by the Maryland Legislature on February 4, 1841. In its peak year of 1850, it numbered one hundred fifty boarders and eighty day students.

The record shows that the most active and respected or-

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[15] As seems to have been the custom only one month—August—was given as the annual vacation.

ganization was a debating society called the "Tulli-pheboian." I take this combination Latin and Greek title to be the middle name of the greatest of the Roman orators—Marcus Tullius Cicero, but the Greek part is still shrouded in mystery. Letters in the McElroy correspondence repeatedly speak of the excellent reputation the society enjoyed in Frederick, and how many times they filled the hall, both with debates in English on such topics as, "Inquisitive Gentlemen" or "Knowledge—a Source of Happiness," as well as a discussion in Greek on "The Sycophant Duped," spiced by a Latin trialogue entitled "Academical Education." The society in 1851 fell into the disciplinary displeasure of Father Samuel Mulledy who caused the expulsion of some of the members. In sympathy with their fellows, many other students left, and with the advent of the Civil War the heyday of McElroy's great dream was passed. Today the parish high school of St. John's still retains the name "Institute."

Some of its alumni reached prominence—local and national—the most famous being Admiral Winfield Scott Schley, the hero of the battle of Santiago in the Spanish American War, General Frank Armstrong, Commissioner for Indian Affairs under President Grover Cleveland, and Judge A. Nelson of the Maryland Court of Appeals.

Chapter V: Army Chaplain

On June 8, 1845 Father McElroy was informed by the Reverend Provincial (Peter Verhaegen, S.J.) that he would be transferred from Frederick. The following day he wrote his superior, requesting that he be given permission to depart without the public becoming aware of it, and that his successor be given two weeks with him to learn the activities and affairs of the parish. At that time McElroy entered the following in his diary:

> July 9—Fr. Visitor [Verhaegan had both titles] told me this morning that I am to be Rector of Georgetown College—*Fiat Voluntas Dei.*

> Aug. 27—Fr. Lilly, S.J. who is to succeed me arrived today from Conewago.
>
> Aug. 28—Received a letter from Fr. Visitor informing me that I am not to be Rector of Georgetown College but pastor of Holy Trinity [Washington, D. C.] . . . give retreats and be consultor of the Province.[1]

I see no point in commenting on this change of mind by the Reverend Visitor, S.J. As noted, it has been suggested that Fr. McElroy was not made Rector because he had not had any formal schooling other than some cursory tutoring in the Order. If he was disappointed, his *Diaries* do not show the least conflict with the superior's judgment and decision.

> Aug. 29—Left Frederick a little after seven A.M. having been there 23 years and 11 months—Lilly [Father] drove me to Monacacy [station on the B. & O. railroad, east of Frederick]—Took leave of the religious of our house. Left a short valedictory to be read on Sunday from the pulpit, also a short notice in one of the papers next Wednesday—bidding them [citizens of Frederick] in this way adieu.[2]

In my estimation this entry is one of the most significant of all that Father McElroy ever wrote. He was at the time sixty-three years old and was suffering from a hernia affliction. Just a recounting of the miles he had covered, the buildings erected, the long hours of instructions, the administrative work of two schools, the care of the orphans, and surely the affectionate regard in which he must have been held by the populace of Frederick, certainly warranted a few words as to his reaction to his transfer. But there are none. He had learned the Ignatian lesson well—"at the least sign of the Superior's will, seeing in that the Will of God"—and for him no comment was necessary.

In any discussion of Father McElroy's chaplaincy during the Mexican War caution must be exercised over the use of the word "chaplain." Father McElroy asserts that he "was the first official Catholic chaplain in the military forces of the United States," and this is subsequently repeated in articles appearing in the *Woodstock Letters*.[3] Two sources clearly

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[1] *Journal 16*, Woodstock Archives.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *W. L.*, 78, 144.

indicate that Fr. McElroy was not officially a chaplain in the Army in the sense that he was a regular commissioned officer of what today is known as the Chaplains' Branch of the Armed Services. The first source is the Official Rolls of General Taylor's Army found in the Old Records Section of the National Archives. A careful perusal failed to find mention of either Fr. McElroy or Fr. Rey, and the latter, even though killed with Taylor's Army near Monterey, Mexico, is not listed among the casualties. This can hardly be an oversight, as the Army Records are extremely careful in listing those killed, especially on foreign soil. The second source is the letter marked "Confidential," written by William Marcy, Secretary of War, to General Taylor, which will be quoted below in full, wherein the Secretary denies that the President has the powers to appoint chaplains. By a Congressional Act of July 5, 1838, Congress had the power to appoint clergymen to "fixed posts for the purpose of tending to the spiritual needs of the personnel, act as instructors to children residing on the post, or in places most destitute of instructions—compensation to vary from $20 to $40 a month—limiting the number to twenty." There was no provision made for such clergymen to be assigned to the Army in the field. We know, of course, that Catholic Priests had served with the military, both in the American Revolution and the War of 1812[4] Rather than have an endless *lis de verbo,* I think it is incorrect to apply the title "first official Catholic chaplains" to Fathers McElroy and Rey and, state instead that the President, using his powers as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Services for this particular occasion and for a definite reason, made the two priests his personal appointments to the Army of Taylor in the field, with all the rights and privileges of what today we mean by a "commissioned chaplain." I regard their position to have been much like what today is commonplace governmental procedure when the President appoints as his personal representative an ambassador extraordinary to a specific country for a special mission.

As will be noted below, President Polk had a definite rea-

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[4] Ardon Henry, *Catholic Military and Naval Chaplains*, Catholic University Press, 1929.

son for wanting Catholic priests attached to General Taylor's Army; and I was interested to find a series of letters from Secretary of War, William Marcy, to four Protestant clergymen anxious to offer their services in the same conflict.[5] The Secretary, quoting the Congressional Act of 5 July 1838, insists that he is without power to appoint these gentlemen to chaplaincies, but that if Congress should give him the necessary permission, he will be heedful of their patriotic offer. One of the Reverend Gentlemen, a Mr. T. M. Leavenworth, insisted on accompanying the New York Volunteers, and Marcy wrote to a Colonel Stevenson as follows:

> I yield my consent that he [Leavenworth] may be taken out on board a transport, but I have no authority to allow him any compensation, or to permit his subsistence to be taken from the public supplies.[6]

The Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore opened in the month of May 1846. During its sessions Bishop John Hughes of New York (1797-1864) was contacted by Secretary of State, James Buchanan (1791-1868, fifteenth President of the United States 1857-61,) at the request of President Polk. Why? The Chief Executive answered this query in his diary as follows:

> Our object was to procure his (Bishop Hughes) aid in disabusing the minds of the Catholic Priests and people of Mexico in regard to what they erroneously suppose to be the hostile designs of the Government and people of the United States upon the religion and church property of Mexico.[7]

Polk further elaborated upon this essential item when in a private conversation with Bishop Hughes he remarked:

> . . . That the false idea has been industriously circulated by interested partisans in Mexico that our object was to overthrow their religion and rob their churches and that if they [the Mexicans] believed this, they would make a desperate resistance to our Army in the present war. Bishop Hughes fully agreed with me . . . that it was important to remove such impressions.

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[5] National Archives, Wash., D. C., War Office, Old Records Section, Military Book No. 26, May 1, 1845-Oct. 7, 1846, p. 487. cf. also pp. 159-258-464-465.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *The Diary of James K. Polk 1845-1849,* edited and annotated by Milo M. Quaife; (Chicago: A. C. McClung Co., 1910), reedited by Allen Nevins (London-New York: Longman Green Co., 1929), pp. 97-98.

Another interesting development, quite in line with Polk's thinking regarding the necessity of having priests with Taylor's Army along the Rio Grande, is a letter from William Marcy, dated May 29, 1846, to Bishop Kendrick of St. Louis, asking for a priest to accompany the expedition under Colonel Stephen W. Kearney, which was to proceed to Santa Fé, New Mexico. This chaplain

> . . . Was to be a man of proper qualifications willing to serve his country in the proper way . . . but I think proper care should be taken to prevent the measure from becoming extensively known.[8]

Since Marcy's letters referred to above, turning down the application of the Protestant ministers, are dated around the same time, it seems he was anxious that the assignment of a priest to Kearney's troops should be kept secret.

How are we to evaluate this action of President Polk? Historical critics of the occupants of the presidential office have varied over the years in extolling their accomplishments to the stars or condemning their most obvious actions as machinations worthy of Machiavelli. James Polk, the first really dark horse candidate in our line of Presidents—nicknamed—"Little Jimmie Polk of Duck River," "Accidental President," and "Jackson's chief cook and bottle washer"—has received a very bad press from the chorus of historical writers on this period. Alfred H. Bill writes:

> It is the little man in the White House whom the student of those times finds ever taking the center of the stage . . . Essentially a small man of petty spite and of abysmal meanness and the basest ingratitude, he was so unconscious of the real nature of his actions that he left a record of them in his diary for all the world to read.[9]

Nevins in reediting Polk's diary[10] calls him a "humorless pedestrian . . . one not given to trusting his subordinates," but notes that much of his so-called duplicity was really timidity which permitted men to deceive themselves, and Nevins sums it up by saying Polk was what the Yankees of his day called a "cutie."

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[8] National Archives, War Dept., Old Records Section, Vol. 8, p. 261.

[9] A. H. Bill, *Rehearsal for Conflict,* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf Co., 1947).

[10] *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

Father McElroy, after returning from Mexico when gathering his impressions on both his mission and the work accomplished, noted that "the object of the President of the United States in our mission was altogether political."[11] Whatever may have been President Polk's motives, his actions had the strong support of Bishop Hughes, who was a personal friend of the Archbishop of Mexico, and the mere presence of Catholic priests with the invading army most certainly was a partial answer that the gringos from the north—the "wild-eyed horde of American Protestant barbarians,"—were not coming solely for the utter extinction of the Church and its property. Taylor's official army reports after he crossed the Nueces River and began his advance to Matamoras on the Rio Grande, give clear indications that both the Mexican military authorities and the people believed the old struggle over the religious differences had been transplanted from Europe, i.e., Protestant English-speaking peoples vs. Spanish-speaking Catholics. It was the age-old routine of Anglo-Saxons vs. the Latins. (If I may add here a personal note—while serving with the United States Army as chaplain in World War II, I found a great deal of incredulity in Northern Ireland among the Catholic population as if we Catholic priests were accompanying a Protestant army—and the clergy in North Africa were skeptical about the priest-chaplains in the Army of the United States.)

James Polk was an expansionist and a firm believer in "manifest destiny" which in the concrete meant to him the annexation of Texas and California. He was a shrewd man, and I can well believe that it was while reading Taylor's communiqués that he determined that the best thing—politically—was the action which sent Fathers McElroy and Rey with the Army.

After his conference with the President, Bishop Hughes repaired to Georgetown College where he interviewed Father Verhaegen, who had been appointed Provincial of the Maryland Province on January 4, 1845.[12] The priests already mentioned were chosen at once, and after dinner the Bishop

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[11] *W. L.* 16, 227.

[12] Catalogue Md. Prov., 1846, p. 5.

returned to the White House to inform the President of the choice. This was May 20, 1846.

On the following day, May 21, 1846, Secretary Marcy wrote to Father Verhaegen,[13] asking him to deliver the two unsealed letters, one to Father John McElroy, the Pastor of Holy Trinity Church, and the other to Father Anthony Rey, the Assistant (*Socius*) to the Rev. Provincial. Marcy informed the Provincial that if there were any suggestions he wished to make he would be pleased to receive them and confer with the President; otherwise, the two priests would receive the proper communications addressed to the general commanding the army on the Rio del Norte (Rio Grande) containing the President's directions in regard to their services.

At the risk of what might seem to be padding this narrative, I deem it very necessary to quote in full both of Secretary Marcy's letters to Father McElroy and to General Taylor.

War Department
May 21, 1846

To the Reverend
John McElroy
Georgetown College

Sir:

The President is desirous to engage two reverend gentlemen of the Roman Catholic Church to attend the Army of Occupation now on the Rio Grande to officiate as Chaplains etc. In his opinion their services would be important in many respects to the public interest particularly in the present condition of our affairs with Mexico. Having sought information as to the proper persons to be thus employed his attention has been directed to you and he has instructed me to address you on the subject in the hope that you may consider it not incompatible with your clerical duties or your personal feelings to yield to his request.

It is proper that I should apprise you that the existing laws do not authorize the President to appoint and commission chaplains but he has the authority to employ persons to perform such duties as appertain to chaplains. Should you con-

[13] Nat. Arch. Old Military Book No. 26, p. 247.

sent as the President hopes you will to visit the Army and remain some time with it you will be allowed a reasonable compensation for expenses and services. Your views of what that ought to be, you will, if you please, suggest to me.

When the law authorized the appointment of chaplains as it formerly did, the pay and emoluments were about one thousand or twelve hundred dollars per annum. This amount would be readily allowed together with the expense of travelling to and from the Army.

I should be pleased to be favored with a reply to this communication at your earliest convenience.

W. L. Marcy
Secretary of War[14]

(CONFIDENTIAL)

War Department, Washington
May 29, 1846

Comd. General of the Occupation
on the Rio Grande, Texas

Sir:

The President has been informed that much pains have been taken to alarm the religious prejudices of the Mexicans against the U. S. He deems it important that their misapprehensions in this respect should be corrected as far as it can be done and for that purpose has invited the Reverend Gentlemen who will hand you this communication, Mr. McElroy, and Mr. Rey of the Roman Catholic Church, to attend to the Army under your command and to officiate as Chaplains. Although the President cannot appoint them as Chaplains, yet it is his wish that they be received in that character by you and your officers, be respected as such, and be treated with kindness and courtesy, that they should be permitted to have intercourse with the soldiers of the Catholic Faith—to administer to them religious instruction, to perform divine service for such as may wish to attend wherever it can be done without interfer-

[14] *W. L.*, 15, 200 ff.

ing with their military duties, and to have free access to the sick and wounded in hospitals or elsewhere.

It is confidently believed that these gentlemen in their clerical capacity will be useful in removing the false impressions of the Mexicans in relation to the U. S. and in inducing them to confide in the assurance you have already given that their religious institutions will be respected, the property of the Church protected, and their worship undisturbed and in fine all their religious rights will be in the amplest manner preserved to them. In fulfilling these objects you are desired to give these gentlemen such facilities as you may be enabled to afford and at such times as in your judgments may be most prudent.

You are requested also to cause to be provided for them such accommodations as will render their abiding with the Army comfortable to themselves. It is believed that when Chaplains were allowed by law to the Army they received in pay and emoluments from about 1000 to 1200 per annum. This amount will be paid to these gentlemen named in this letter.

As these gentlemen do not speak Spanish they have been desired by the President to associate with them another Clergyman who both understands and speaks it. Such person recommended by them you will receive on the same footing with themselves.

Very respectfully
Your obedient servant
W. L. Marcy,[15]
Secretary of War

A few days after this official communication was sent to Father McElroy, the newly chosen priests visited the Secretary of War who introduced them to President Polk (*Journal 17*) who expressed his "sincere desire that their mission would be one of peace and that they would carry the olive branch and not the sword," but above all Polk insisted "that your mission would be a refutation of the erroneous belief held in Mexico that the United States was warring against

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[15] National Archives, Old Army Records, Vol. 3, p. 261.

their religion." The motive may have appeared political but this language coming from the Chief Executive impressed both priests with the seriousness of their undertaking.

The trek to Mexico began June 2, 1846, and the arrival in Matamoras, Mexico is noted in the entry dated July 6, 1846. Father McElroy kept a rather minute account of his itinerary during these weeks which is recorded in the *Woodstock Letters* 16, 33, ff. Some significant entries regarding slaves and their conditions may be worth quoting, v.g.:

> June 14 . . . Stopped to take on wood from a farm with over 200 slaves. They are well treated and comfortably lodged. Their cabins are neat. They cut wood for river boats at $1.50 a cord. The master gives them 62½ cents—they earn between $3 to $4 a week. I met an old Negro woman perhaps a hundred years of age and asked her if she knew anything about religion. She replied "to be sure—I know my Jesus made me: me to him, him to me." This seemed to be all her creed and she repeated it over and over again with great animation.
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> June 15—In Mississippi. Everywhere the Negroes seem to be treated very humanely and their homes are neatly whitewashed and appear very comfortable.

From Louisville, Kentucky, to New Orleans, Louisiana, the trip was made by boat and the Mississippi River deeply impressed the Irish immigrant by its length and width. On one of the famous steam boats he ran across a deckhand from Roscommon and noted "I gave him some advice." We may be sure it had to do with making "his duties." McElroy reached New Orleans on June 18 and put up at the St. Charles Hotel which he believed with the business man's eye "was the finest in the United States costing $600,000, leased for $45,000 per annum and the rooms were rented at $2.50 a day."

The trip across the Gulf of Mexico was exceedingly stormy and McElroy's companion, Father Rey,[16] was extremely seasick, so much so "that had the rough seas lasted many days longer he could not have survived." The last port of call on American soil was Port Isabel, Texas, where they landed July 2, and where they found fifteen Catholic soldiers, who had been wounded "chiefly Irish" and one honest-to-goodness son of Erin who was a Presbyterian "until now but well dis-

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[16] *Journal 17.* June 28, 1846.

posed, I (McElroy) prepared him and heard his confession in port."[17] Finally, on July 6, 1846, they arrived at Matamoras which was about sixty miles up the Rio Grande. This was to be the scene of Father McElroy's apostolate for the next eleven months.

Father Anthony Rey, S.J.

Here we will leave Father McElroy for a few moments and add to the narrative some remarks about his fellow chaplain, Father Anthony Rey, whose letters are to be found in the Georgetown Archives under "Letters—Rey." The main reason for this interruption is the fact that his name so frequently occurs in the McElroy correspondence both to the Reverend Provincial at Georgetown and in communications between the two priests.

Father Anthony Rey was born in Lyons, France on March 19, 1807. He studied in the University of Fribourg. His arrival at Georgetown is entered in the 1840 catalogue as "Professor of Mathematics." In 1843 he served as assistant pastor of Old St. Joseph's in Philadelphia, and in 1845 he was appointed *Socius* to the Provincial, Provincial Consultor and Administrator of Georgetown College. His very fruitful life came to a tragic close when he was set upon by what are described in Gen. Taylor's letters to Father McElroy as "banditti" on January 19, 1847, at a place called "Marin" about twenty-five miles from Monterey, Mexico.

Shortly after their arrival at Matamoras Fr. Rey accompanied General Taylor's army for the assault on the northern stronghold of Monterey. There seems little doubt that the reason Fr. Rey was chosen rather than Fr. McElroy was their age-difference, plus the medical fact that the latter had been suffering from a hernia affliction dating from his last year at Frederick, which was to become so painful in the ensuing months that by early 1847 he was unable to mount a horse to carry him around to the various hospitals in Matamoras. The text of the letters between Fathers McElroy and Rey have been published in the *Woodstock Letters,* and for this record it may be noted that Fr. Rey's eyewitness account of the battle of

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[17] *Ibid.*

Monterey, September 21-23, 1846, is superbly written. Between the battle and his death in January, 1847, Fr. Rey was very anxious for Fr. McElroy to join him for active duty, believing that the hospital work at Matamoras could be suspended for a while because of the urgent need for spiritual administration to the fighting men who were preparing for the campaign against Buena Vista. In the last letter of the series written the day before he was murdered, Fr. Rey explained to Fr. Thomas Mulledy, President of Georgetown, that "I will start for Carmargo and Matamoras as I am very anxious to see Fr. McElroy from whom I have been separated since the 4th of August" (1846).[18] Fr. Rey had learned from McElroy's letters that because of his physical condition it was impossible for him to make the long journey, but of even greater importance to Fr. McElroy (as seen from the *Diaries*) was the spiritual care of the sick and wounded which consumed every moment of his days. Did Fr. Rey have a premonition of his untimely and violent death and hence his anxiety to see his friend and co-worker Fr. McElroy? Just outside of the Mexican village of Marin the priest and his body servant—an Irishman—were accosted by the outlaws, one of whom later was identified as having been the sacristan of the village church.

After Fr. Rey's death Fr. McElroy received a communication from a certain Caleb Cushing, a Colonel in the Massachusetts Volunteers,[19] who was with Taylor's Army according to the official Army Rolls in the National Archives, which read in part:

> It is unfortunately true that Father Rey was murdered in the neighborhood of Meir [Marin] and it is ascertained he was murdered by Mexicans because he was an American and a priest. He exhibited to his murderers abundant proof of his Clerical character—The assassins' political motives were jealousy and resentment—The authors of this infamy are known and will not escape punishment sooner or later.[20]

The record further shows that the following day the villagers

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[18] Georgetown Archives, "Letters—Rey."

[19] Colonel Caleb Cushing, U. S. Commissioner to China in 1843. Negotiated first treaty.

[20] *Journal 18.* April 18, 1847.

decently buried Father Rey near the village church and placed a marker on his grave. Retribution was swift in arriving, for within a few days the village of Marin was levelled to the ground by American artillery, mostly—as far as I can gather from the records—because it was a roadblock on the way to Santillo and, also, perhaps because it was a hide-out for just such bandits as took the life of this zealous Jesuit. Father McElroy also received a letter from General Taylor and other officers expressing personal and official sympathy upon the death of Father Rey.

When Taylor's Army entered Matamoras in May of 1846, the city had a population of 8,000. It presented a sad contrast to the romantic and adventurous expectations of the invading northern "barbarians." Dismal and dilapidated, its air polluted by the stench from the hastily improvised and poorly cared for hospitals that the retreating Mexicans had crammed with their wounded after the battles of Palo Alto and Reseca de la Palma. But within a month it had become transformed into a typically American town. Grog shops and gambling houses sprang up overnight, ice was shipped in and mint juleps became the order of the day. Sutlers followed the army and merchants swarmed in with stocks of Lowell calicoes. A newspaper was established called by the awe-inspiring title of *The Republic of the Rio Grande and The People's Friend* and edited by Hugh McLeod, a former West-Pointer—"and even the great Shakesperian actor Joseph Jefferson graced the boards of an American built theater displaying his histrionic talents before a motley array of soldiers, settlers, gamblers and the rest of the rag-tag and bob-tail."[21]

Arriving in early July of 1846, what did McElroy think of this sordid city? He wrote:

> Of this City of Matamoras I can say nothing favorable . . . The buildings are very mean; there is not a respectable house in the whole place and what I required more than all, no good church, I might say none at all for about 8 or 10 thousand Catholics . . . Since they have thrown off the Spanish Yoke [Revolution of the early 1820's] not one Church has been erected in all Mexico.[22]

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[21] Bill, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

[22] *Journal 12A*, p. 20.

So much for the physical condition. Now what about his reaction to the spiritual life of these people? He observed:

> The state of religion in Mexico as it fell under my notice is most deplorable—(But my personal experience is limited.)—Yet, what I have learned from respectable sources and from what I have seen a tolerably correct idea may be formed of the whole and my conclusion is that there is no country in the world more destitute of the labors of the sacred ministry than Mexico.[23]

Even admitting McElroy's limited contacts with the clergy, which during the time he was there were confined to the local parish priest, Father Rodriguez, and a few stray visitors—for there is no record that he ever met a member of the hierarchy—the record of the time shows that for the rank and file of the Catholic population he was not far from the truth.

But John McElroy was too practical to sit and lament about a situation which, like slavery in the United States, he had neither caused nor could do anything about. So, embracing the Ignatian method of using all creatures *tantum-quantum*, he used the sacristry of the church for a chapel, simply because it was roofed over, and there daily Mass, instruction classes and other religious functions were held. When the weather permitted, he offered Mass amid the walls of what he called "the unfinished Church." Having taken care of the Lord's work he now shopped around for living quarters, and he informs us that he "found one small room with two old cots (no mattres, [sic] chair or table, much inferior to what the widow of Serepta had prepared for the Prophet of old) and the charge was $10 per week per man.[24]

Since most of his priestly work would be as a hospital chaplain he found upon his arrival that General Taylor's Medical Corps had set up two large tents within the army encampment for those not dangerously ill, whereas within the town limits a general army hospital was in progress of being built. Before he left the following year at least five different buildings in Matamoras were used for the same purpose.

The day following his arrival in Matamoras Father Mc-

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[23] *Ibid.*, 20.

[24] *Ibid.*, 21.

Elroy, accompanied by a Colonel Whiting, was received by General Taylor who:

> . . . Received us kindly at the door of his tent seated us on a very homely and rough bench as he did himself—He tendered us cordially his services to do for us whatever he could—His tent differed in nothing from any of the others—no larger—Small bed, a trunk and a board table to write on . . .[25]

A rather pleasant surprise met Father McElroy at this first meeting with Taylor, for attached to his staff were two former students of his beloved St. John's Institute at Frederick: Lieutenants Lee and Schrader. On July 13 General Taylor was host at a dinner for the chaplains which is noted as having been a "very good plain dinner. Afterwards three kinds of wine and melon. Time 1 P.M."[26]

Actually, Father McElroy was not a complete stranger to Taylor. He had already received the letter quoted above from Secretary of War Marcy, and I found in the McElroy letters one of introduction from no less a national figure than Dolly Madison, which, I believe, is worth quoting in full:

> Washington, June 8, 1846—It is with singular pleasure that I greet General Taylor with many wishes for the maintenance of his health, good fortune and that beautiful determination to mercy which embellishes the patriot's glory with which he has covered himself.
>
> The respected and good Chaplain McElroy who will present these lines to you has long been known to me as one of high character and regarded by all of us as one of a pure spirit and integrity—I trust you will meet happily.
>
> Your Friend and relative,
> D. P. Madison[27]

As is well known, Zachary Taylor—because of his brilliant war record in the northern Mexican campaign—became the successful Whig Candidate in the election of 1848 and the twelfth President of the United States. He died in office in 1850 and was succeeded by Millard Fillmore. Father McElroy would meet Taylor on a few more occasions before the expedition against Monterey began, and it is very much

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[26] *Journal 17*, July 13.

[27] McElroy Letters, Woodstock Archives Box 11 W5 B.

worthwhile to record his impressions of this shrewd but simple soldier.

> I was surprised at the simplicity of his manner, his frankness in conversation, the plainness of his dress and surroundings. Such a man seems intended for a general, not only has he the confidence of the whole army as their chief, but he acquires it more effectively by his example—His modesty only equalled by his bravery—while his affability renders him accessible to all.[28]

Bill[29] calls Taylor "Novus Volus" because he maintained slack discipline and tolerated much drinking and gambling. Lt. Col. Ethan Allan Hitchcock, commanding officer of the 3d Infantry, doubted that either Taylor or any high ranking officer could form a line of battle. Lt. George G. Meade who would turn back the "gray hosts" at Gettysburg, saw in Taylor "a plain substantial gentleman." A final comment on this Grant-like soldier is that while he dressed in a slovenly manner, he pushed his troops with energy. The local newspaper, the *Matamoras Gazette*, called him "a hearty looking gentleman . . . with keen flashing eyes." He detested martial pomp and circumstance. "Ben," he would shout, and the servant appeared with a tin tray bearing two black bottles, shining tumblers and an earthenware pitcher filled with the water of the Rio Grande. "Help yourselves, Gentlemen" Zachary's voice would ring out and none were found slow in obeying this order.

Most of the apostolic work of Father McElroy at Matamoras was accomplished in the army hospitals. Inevitably, the toil fell into a certain routine pattern—daily Mass in the covered shed which served as sacristy, visits to the various buildings being used as hospitals, and more visits to the local units around Matamoras—either troops moving up to support Taylor's army or returning units awaiting discharge. The *Diaries 16* through *20* are, therefore, rather repetitious, except for the change of days, months or year. This sixty-four year old apostle was not satisfied with the routine, and interspersed in these daily entries are two subjects worthy of comment. As we have seen from his Georgetown days, McElroy

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[28] *W. L.*, 33, 21.

[29] *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

always was a school teacher at heart. Undoubtedly, this predilection dated from his boyhood days in Ireland, where he had acquired his learning the hard way, and to this was added his experience in Frederick. While at Matamoras he used whatever time he could spare to begin classes for the children of both the merchants and army personnel. The curriculum included reading, writing, arithmetic and geography.[30]

At first these classes were held in the evenings, but by February 1847 the number of pupils had increased and he switched the hours to eight to ten in the mornings for the boys, and ten to noon for the girls, noting that "they returned home reciting the *Angelus* along with Acts of Faith, Hope, Love and the *Confiteor*." For both sexes he included large doses of catechism and remarked in a letter to Fr. Rey (1/19/47) that he had "four females under instruction for Baptism and First Holy Communion." One drummer boy age sixteen, named James Edgar, he instructed in the elements and taught him how to serve Mass, only to have the lad hurry away to General Winfield Scott's expedition then forming at Tampico, Mexico, in March, 1847.

Looking over the list of students in *Journal 20,* I found no Spanish sounding names. Fr. McElroy could not speak Spanish, and there is silence as to whether he ever had any close contact with the native population of Matamoras outside of the local padre whom he called "Doctor Rodriquez." He made no mention as to how many days the school was in operation or what were the results, but from his records at Georgetown and Frederick I feel sure that these youngsters never forgot their teacher.

Another facet of his activities as chaplain, and in some manner connected with his routine hospital work, was the making of converts of which he made a specialty. In appraising this part of his work numbers must not be the criterion because the total of converts on record is only approximately thirty-five. Some of these were dying men received into the Church with the Sacraments given conditionally; but the important factor is that most of the converts were Souther-

[30] *Journal 20,* Dec. 12, 1846.

ners between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four, with such typical southern names as Muse, Huff, Hackett, Taylor, Dickens, Lovee, etc. In one of the few comments interspersed in these *Journals* McElroy noted that his very presence among the soldiers had the effect of a silent sermon, since most of them were for the first time seeing a Catholic priest, and hearing about the Catholic Church. Of course, many a Catholic returned to the Sacraments when *in extremis*. I have often thought that the tedious but pleasant task of making a convert is not fully appreciated by most Catholics, who take their faith and its beauty for granted. Added to the time element, the physical surroundings under which Fr. McElroy pursued this act of charity for the love of God were so trying that I believe this will be the brightest jewel in his chaplain's crown. To cite a few examples:

> Aug. 21, 1846—Three Protestants received into the Church recently. Mr. Priddy an Englishman, 4th U. S. Regulars. Mr. Smith regular Army—native of Philadelphia. A youth named John Estes a volunteer age 18 from Ohio—without parents. He was dying and received the consent of his brother age 19. Also can add two Kentucky Volunteers, Buchan and Sparks.[31]
>
> Sept. 21, 1846—. . . Found a man in hospital today named Lowe from Alabama—extremely ignorant knowing nothing of God or of our Saviour. Illiterate without education—he had a difficulty (about receiving baptism) namely, he did not have any money.—He was received into the Church but died quite suddenly.[32]
>
> Jan. 24, 1847—Convert Lt. Scannon—Confession and Communion this morning with great edification—The late movement [Oxford] in the Church of England induced him to examine—The result was his embracing the Catholic Faith. The lieutenant left the next day to join Scott's attack against Vera Cruz[33]

There is in the McElroy folder of letters at Woodstock a letter from a Mr. Charles Whalen of Greensboro, Alabama, thanking Fr. McElroy in the name of the parents of Lt. May for his kindness to their son on his death bed. May had attended Georgetown College, finished Harvard Law School, was thirty years old and married. The boy's father was a

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[31] *Journal 20.*

[32] *Journal 20.*

[33] *Journal 16.*

Baptist preacher. In *Journal 20,* under date of September 26, 1846, we read:

> Lt. May dying—perfectly resigned to the will of God . . . Will baptize him tomorrow; he embraced me as a child and begged me to pray for him . . . —When I returned to the hospital in the morning he was dead.

No doubt such things happen to a great number of priests, but we can rest assured that Lt. May is an example of the dogmatic principle of "baptism of desire."

As he had done at Frederick, McElroy kept statistics which we find here and there in the *Journals* regarding the number of faithful who received the Sacraments. In *Journal 20,* from July to December, 1846, he listed the number of Holy Communions as 126. Why so few? He partially answered this himself in an aside written in August, 1846, to the effect that "men of this class [soldiers] are very much exposed to temptations and unhappily before they enlist are often addicted to intemperance."[34]

Now, added to the usual circumstances of camp life, in McElroy's case there was another. This army was in what was called a Catholic country. Here was a city of eight thousand without a church in which most of the people were ignorant and poorly instructed in their Catholic Faith. That this did not go unnoticed by McElroy we can see in *Journal 17,* under date of August 1, 1846

> . . . Very little attention paid here [Matamoras] to Sunday even by Catholics, the apparent neglect of religion in all classes is truly lamentable.
> Sept. 15, 1846—The Blessed Sacrament is not kept here in any of the churches.
> Dec. 12, 1846—My Mass and that of Father Rodriquez well attended; it was the national feast day of our Lady of Guadalupe, but also no one was seen approaching the Altar or confession.
> Dec. 25, 1846—No confessions of the natives.[35]

That Fr. McElroy ever made any impression on the Mexican population of Matamoras is quite doubtful. It may have been his lack of Spanish, or the fact that he—in their minds—

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[34] *W. L.,* 16, 39.
[35] *Journal 18.*

represented the hated gringo from the North, for he wrote to Fr. Rey in a letter dated December 12, 1846:

> . . . As for understanding the natives by travelling among them I believe we have done little. They seem to increase daily in their hostility toward us, I mean the Americans. Our Lord seems to have other views than the President.[36]

No further comment seems appropriate to the point raised, namely, that his priestly work was very much hampered both by the type of mankind he was dealing with and the locale wherein he was exercising the ministry.

Yet, Father McElroy was a person who certainly enjoyed good company. Not all his days at Matamoras were filled with brooding over his own inability to do more for the glory of God, or worrying about the sad state of the Church in Mexico. He visited often among the merchants of the town, and with three named Hale, Devine, and O'Reilly he became very friendly. These men with their families were Catholics, and they were happy to have in their midst an Irish priest while their children attended his little school. With the officers the good padre also was very much "at home," for they impressed him as belonging to a group of men of whom he noted:

> I have never met a more gentlemanly body—courteous, affable—and the more I cultivated their acquaintance the more I appreciated their characters—An honor to their profession, they deserve well of this country.[37]

Among the officers listed in his entries Fr. McElroy had the pleasure of meeting a few whose names would become household words some fifteen years later when the Civil War would convulse the nation. They were: Robert Patterson, whose colossal blunder in allowing Joe Johnston to escape from the Shenandoah Valley in 1861, allowed the Confederate General to arrive on the field at First Bull Run and turn an apparent defeat into a rout of the Union Army; Simon Bolivar Buckner, who would surrender to U. S. Grant at Fort Donelson in February of 1862; and, finally, George G. Meade, who would turn

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[36] Box 11 W. Woodstock Arch.

[37] *W. L.*, 31, 20.

back Robert E. Lee's second invasion of the North at Gettysburg in July 1863.

The founder of his Order, St. Ignatius Loyola, had played pool to win influence over a man difficult to persuade; St. Francis Xavier had played cards on the way to India, both to while away the time and, much more, to win, because if the Saint won the others promised to go to confession. So, I suppose McElroy working the *tantum-quantum* theory of spirituality, saw no reason why he should not use food and drink in the same manner. In *Journal 18* we find the following entry:

> December 4, 1846—A salute was fired this morning from Fort Brown to compliment General Patterson on his arrival . . . now on his way to Tampico . . . Met the General accidentally on the Street: he stopped with Major Abercrombie and addressed me by name . . . Visited him on the 5th; he received me very graciously . . .

About 10 days later Fr. McElroy entertained at dinner the following: General Patterson, Colonels Clarke and Taylor, Majors Abercrombie and McCall, and Lieutenants Chase and Williams—all of the regular army. The menu, made up no doubt by McElroy with special care, consisted of:

> Corned Beef and Sauerkraut, Turkey roasted (wild), a pair of wild ducks roasted, beef tongues boiled, a fine roast of beef, potatoes, macaroni, rice, pickled onions and cucumbers. Dessert: rice pudding, custard, oranges, raisins and almonds. Claret and Madeira wines concluded with a glass of Irish Whiskey; they remained to 5 o'c., apparently well pleased. I have not had more agreeable company. Although attended with some expense and trouble, it is more than repaid I hope by the good produced. These gentlemen only know us by our conversations—They do not attend our churches—They are ignorant of the content of our doctrine—These [dinners] inspire confidence and remove prejudice, etc.[38]

While Father McElroy was in Matamoras news reached the United States of the devastating effects of the potato famine in Ireland. His heart was touched as he thought of the agonies of his homeland and losing no time he swung into action. Soldiers may not be the best or most edifying communicants the Church possesses, but they are certainly among the most charitable. At the Masses on March 15, 1847, McElroy took

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[38] *Journal 18.*

up a collection for the famine victims totalling $800, which he forwarded on March 22, through a draft in the care of a Mr. Hale, one of the local merchants, via New Orleans, to Archbishop McHale of Tuam, Ireland. He enclosed a list of names, proudly pointing out to his Grace that they were all Irishmen except a Juan Lopez and his servant, adding with an even prouder pen:

> . . . A majority of the U. S. Regulars are Catholics and this has been the first appointment of chaplains of their faith . . .[39]

and signed the communication "Chaplain John McElroy, S.J., U. S. Army." The Irish immigrant turned Jesuit educator, builder, maker of converts and chaplain, was now returning a part of his debt to the land of his birth in her hour of dire need.

After the fall of Monterey in September 1846, there was much talk of peacemaking in the ensuing months. General Santa Anna, the Mexican President, seems to have desired this course of action after he successfully overthrew Paredes in August 1846. These rumors are noted in the *Journals,* even to the point where they were accepted as facts, only to have them fade away. McElroy must have recalled a letter he had written to Secretary Marcy on May 23, 1846, before he left Georgetown for his assignment, which I found among his letters, and which states in part:

> . . . Lastly, if circumstances were to justify it, some time after our arrival it might make a favorable impression on the Mexicans to have an interview with some of the officers or Chaplain, under a flag of truce; our statement we hope would be accredited that we are a pacific people and that we wish to cultivate by all honorable means this relation with them, etc. Of course to the General-in-Chief must be left the time and manner whose instructions in such a case would be implicitly carried out.[40]

Since Marcy in his official communiqué to Taylor introducing the Jesuit Priests never even mentions the letter, it must have been relegated to the realm of what "might have been."

On May 5, 1848, we read:

> Received a letter from Rev. Provincial (Verhaegen) dated April

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[39] *Journal 19.*

[40] McElroy Letters—Woodstock Archives Box 11 W 2.

12, directing me to return to Georgetown as soon as I could make it convenient—I was sorry to leave having found acquaintance with many of the officers and a few of the citizens.[41]

Fr. McElroy had been in Matamoras over ten months, and both from his own correspondence and that of Fr. Rey (before his death) to the Provincial can be seen that the mission in its political coloring had been quite a failure. McElroy's age and physical condition, i.e., his continued suffering from the hernia complication, must have convinced Father Verhaegen that the recall was A.M.D.G. Fr. McElroy made quick preparations for leaving. On Sunday, May 9, he celebrated Mass for the last time publicly, and instructed the congregation on the manner of obtaining the Jubilee Indulgences granted by his Holiness Pope Pius IX. He wrote that he "had the great consolation of giving Holy Communion to about forty persons."

On May 11, he left Matamoras after having said a six o'clock Mass, breakfasted with a Mr. Kidder, and after having taken his leave of some "old friends." The quartermaster furnished him with a carriage for the trip to Brazos (port of entry on the Gulf of Mexico). His one regret above personal separation from friends and acquaintances was, in his own words, "that no priest would be available for the English Catholics and sick in the hospital."

His return to the States was quite uneventful, and the *Journals* repeat an almost verbatim itinerary of his passage down from Georgetown to Matamoras, only in reverse. He had his visit with the provincial in Philadelphia on July 19, 1847. There is nothing in his own handwriting to give an explanation of just why he was recalled, nor is there any record of what Father Verhaegen thought about his chaplaincy in Mexico.

But, in retrospect, no better commentary on Father McElroy and his work as chaplain during his stay at Matamoras could be made than that expressed in the final letter he received from General Taylor, found among the McElroy Letters.[42]

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[41] *Journal 18.*

[42] Box 11 W 5 E—Woodstock Archives.

Headquarters Army of Occupation
Camp near Monterey, Mexico
June 1, 1847

My dear Sir:

Although much occupied and particularly with an increased private correspondence I cannot pass over your letter (May 10, 1847) without acknowledging my grateful appreciation of your esteem—and permit me to express my regrets that, though your labors in the sacred office have been of so much good, *you were unable to accomplish one of the great objects of your mission . . . Re* the death of Father Rey: details have on inquiry come to my knowledge, doubtful in their minute character as to the truth, nevertheless seem to confirm the general belief of his being wilfully murdered even with the knowledge of his sacred profession . . . Accept for yourself my high esteem and regard . . .

Yours most sincerely,
(Signed) Z. TAYLOR, Major General,
U. S. Army

It certainly seems obvious that the words "you were unable to accomplish," etc. in Taylor's letter can have only one meaning. In the light of Polk's *Diary,* Marcy's letters, and McElroy's own statement the prime motive of the chaplaincy of the two Jesuits, as far as the United States was concerned, was that they were to be ambassadors of good will to the Mexican hierarchy, clergy and, if possible, the population. In this the mission was a failure.

In the Woodstock Archives I found a *Journal* listed as "12A4" on the flyleaf of which Fr. McElroy made the following entry:

> This volume contains a brief history of the Chaplaincy to Mexico during the war with that country. This book belongs to the archives of the Province of Maryland and is to be restored to the Provincial promptly and faithfully by whomever he may lend it to for a time. (April 15, 1872).

After a lapse of 25 years Fr. McElroy summarized his observations on this matter under date of April 15, 1872, which I think should be included in this record:[43]

> 1) The object of the President of the United States in our mission was altogether political.

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[43] *W. L.*, 16, 227 ff.

2) The haste—and the prevalent idea that the war would be short—prevented Superiors from giving to our missionary duties such preparation as would make them more useful for the good of souls and creditable to religion.

3) Both Fr. Rey and myself were without experience or knowledge of military life.

4) Could the wants of the soldiers have been foreseen, four or five priests would have been necessary, two with Taylor and two with Scott.

5) Early in the campaign [Taylor against Monterey] over six hundred [soldiers] died at Conargo—many Catholics, no priests—at Point Isabel—Brazos, Santiago . . .

6) Soldiers shy in beginning became familiar and confident with us in the end.

7) It is in such functions (on battlefield or hospital) our religion becomes in their eyes what it always was—a religion based upon charity having for its divine author the God of Charity. Such examples from the priesthood dispel at once the calumnies so often reiterated against us and cause our faith to be viewed in a different light and in what more glorious cause can life be sacrificed than in such as I have described?[44]

Truly, Father John McElroy was a remarkable man. For upon his return to the Province he caught his second breath and began life over again with renewed vigor. Now 64 years old, he spent many years in Boston, and among his achievements there was the acceptance of the pastorship of St. Mary's Church in the North End from Bishop Fitzpatrick; this church had been the scene of protracted turmoil over lay trusteeism, which it is presumed he brought to a successful conclusion. While pastor of St. Mary's McElroy once again reverted to type, and, having acquired property on Harrison Avenue, he became the founder of Boston College. This episode in his life is recorded for posterity in the pages of Father Dunigan's *History of Boston College.* Our narrative ends in 1847.

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[44] *Ibid.*

Chapter V: The Man Spiritual

Obviously, no story of the life of John McElroy would be worth the telling unless his spiritual character were delineated. There is no need here to recount in detail the spiritual discipline that goes into the formation of a son of Loyola. That Father McElroy was cast in the golden mould of the Spiritual Exercises, that he was first of all a priest mindful of his duties and obligations, that he was a dedicated soul who wanted little of McElroy and all of Christ, need not be belabored here. From his first *Diaries* to the end, the desire of John McElroy was to be the least in the Society of Jesus, and clearly etched on his every day and year was the motto of the Jesuits, "For the Greater Honor and Glory of God."

Two of the *Diaries* are entitled *Spiritual*, and there is in them little that surprises. They deal with his early years, and the curious will look in vain for anything out of the ordinary. They contain entries in the usual chronological order of reflections and resolutions, of notes on instructions by spiritual directors, on sermons, pious books, mental prayer, etc. I believe that the secret of McElroy's long life of fervent activity for God's glory was, first, that he did well the ordinary things; and, second, that in recounting what actually were extraordinary accomplishments for his day and age, it never occurred to him that he was recording anything extraordinary. Very few saints, or even the great men of secular history, ever seemed to have been conscious that they were in any way exceptional. Yet it is the faithful performance of what the small man calls the daily humdrum that sets great men apart. In 1808, in an addendum to his *Spiritual Diary I*, McElroy wrote:

> I must begin my day with the fervent endeavor to keep myself in the presence of God till noon . . . I must not interfere in the offices of the other lay brothers . . . Tradesmen must be dealt with with prudence and modesty . . . Finally in all your actions keep a strict guard over your heart united to God.

As a Jesuit, McElroy knew full well that his mission was "to be in the world and not of it." How then was he to con-

duct himself? He had the rules of his Order; then there were the customs or traditions of his Province; really, not much was left to chance. From notes written during a retreat prior to his last vows which he pronounced on February 2, 1821, he reflected that this is how John McElroy will act:

> . . . Treat them [seculars] with charity and mildness and always a modest exterior . . . No useless conversations . . . No familiarity with females . . . The more reserved you keep yourself the greater edification you will gain . . . Take care you imbibe no part of the world . . . To be of service to your neighbor, keep [to] your room as much as possible.

This last bit of spiritual advice may seem strange to the uninitiated who believe in the *effusio ad exteriora,* but therein lies the key to the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven by those who have been chosen to forward the work of salvation. The religious who would be an instrument for others must first himself be grounded in the knowledge and strength of things divine before he can be of any use, and this grounding, McElroy believed, was attained in the quiet of his room.

Although it is very difficult to probe the depths of Father McElroy's spiritual life from the yellowing pages of his *Diaries* because, as already noted, these pages reflect but little of his vivid personality. Perhaps the fire and enthusiasm of the man can best be gleaned from the breadth of the outward manifestations of his spiritual activities. For instance, the archdioceses and dioceses in which he gave the first retreats to the clergy included New York, Boston, Baltimore, St. Louis, Albany, Bardstown (Kentucky), Louisville, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Charleston, S. C., Richmond, Charlottestown on Prince Edward Island, and Arichot, Nova Scotia. He also gave parish retreats in many places from St. Louis, Missouri to Baltimore, Maryland. Nor should we fail to recall the many instances on which Fr. McElroy was chosen to be what was called "the orator of the occasion." The record, then, makes it clear that this rugged apostle can truly be called the "spiritual circuit rider," and that his life was aptly summarized by those who knew him well as having had great influence on the formation of both the clergy and the faithful during the nineteenth century in the United States.

There is in the files a letter of August 1842 from Bishop

Benedict Fenwick of Boston written to the Rev. Provincial (Dzierozynski) to be forwarded with his correspondence to the Jesuit General (Roothaan) at Rome, which reads as follows:

> I cannot express to you in adequate terms my sincere thanks for the permission given to good Father McElroy to conduct our clergy retreat—The father was untiring—full of zeal and of the love of God and the profoundest humility—impressing upon us (the clergy) a deep sense of our vocation and tremendous responsibilities—He is truly an apostolic man and an ornament to the Society—May God give us in this region more like him.[1]

Letters are extant extolling McElroy from Archbishop Hughes of New York, and Bishop O'Connor of Pittsburgh, Bishop Kendrick of Philadelphia, Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati, Bishop Spalding of St. Louis, etc. A homely touch is noted in *Journal 10* under date of November 5, 1841, when he was conducting the priests' retreat at Dunwoodie, N. Y., along the lines of the Ignatian Exercises, because on this occasion he also exercised himself in another manner, which he seemed to enjoy—namely, cooking. He wrote: "I directed the cooking of the dinner and then proceeded to help serve it." Perhaps the good Father, with a sort of ironic humor, was going to make sure the Fathers on retreat would do more than just taste his culinary artistry. Various articles in the Woodstock Archives, written by fellow Jesuits, also praise his skill as a retreat master.

Within recent years there has developed in the three Eastern provinces of the Society of Jesus, namely, New England, New York, and Maryland, the movement to conduct open retreats in the parishes, generally from Thursday afternoon to Saturday evening. McElroy began this movement in Frederick as early as 1825, and it continued to be one of his pet projects. The number of cities favored by his spiritual influence was as widespread as his travels. Some random statistics may give an inkling of the success with which God blessed his labors. In November, 1841, at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, he had need of "ten confessors till late at night," and the following morning "over one thou-

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[1] Maryland Provincial Archives J.G.A. Md. 7, VIII.

sand approached the holy table." In Richmond (May 1847) with only about, as he put it, "one hundred Catholics in the city . . . the church was crowded and there were about two hundred communions in a week." In Charleston (February 1845) where Father Rey spoke in French to the congregations, "over three hundred went to Holy Communion," and there was a "fine choir." At Pittsburgh in June of 1844, "eight confessors were employed from the first day on . . . The last day necessary to use ten. Holy Communions exceeded 2500."[2] As far as the schedule of the lay retreats was concerned, McElroy followed the timing that he had inaugurated at Frederick. Mass began the day at 6 A.M., and the day was filled with meditations, spiritual readings, Rosary, family instructions, à Kempis, reviews of the meditations, while the evening service closed the day at 9 P.M. Truly a full day in the life of the parishioners!

This chapter may well be concluded with an appreciation of Father McElroy, written by Father Aloysius Jordan, S.J., whose manuscript diary is now in possession of Fr. Bartholomew Fair of St. Charles Seminary, Overbrook, Pa.

> Father McElroy was a man of sterling principles—a man of great natural cleverness—His sermons were always effective but by no means rhetorical. Father McElroy three times was offered a bishopric but managed to escape through Father General.[3]

Briefly, then, here is the eager worker in the vineyard, who began laboring at the first hour and persevered to the twelfth. Here is a priest whose sixty years of ministry were filled with a harvest beyond the telling. No man of God could have done what John McElroy did unless his being had been filled with the driving power of a deep spiritual life. He could well exclaim with the man from Tarsus: "By the grace of God I am, what I am"!

His Death

The final entry in the Province Catalogue for 1877 contains the following: "Vita functi P. Joannes McElroy . . . act. 96,

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[2] Most of this information is in *Journal 16*.

[3] American Catholic Historical Society (1901); Vol. 12, p. 216.

rel. 71, Tempus: 12 Sept. 1877, Locus: Dom. Prob. Fred.[1]

And so, as it must to all men, death came to him. But for it he was neither unprepared nor particularly taken by surprise; for, be it noted, he was impatient to gaze upon the face of his divine Master, or, in his own words, "I am afraid the Dear Lord has forgotten to call me home." The last known letter in manuscript written by John McElroy, June 30, 1877 is preserved in the Woodstock Archives, and shows that his eyesight was failing. It is written to Father McDonough of Woodstock College, and since it is almost a last will and testament, it may not be amiss to close out the mortal life of McElroy with a sentence from it which could well illuminate his entire life—"By that adorable name (of Jesus) which you bear and that sacred habit which you wear, may they be constant monitors to the grand principles of His whole life included in our venerable motto, A.M.D.G."[2]

How could the vivacity and vigor of a man like John McElroy be reduced to the cold print of a page? Is it possible to encompass within the allotted space the incomparable grandeur of his vision and of his work for his "dear Lord?" I would say his was a noble character, rugged and massive as some Himalayan mountain peak, yet warm and tender as a sunkissed valley at eventide. His judgments were broad, comprehensive and understanding. In building the parishes and schools at Frederick and Boston he was a man slow in reaching conclusions but swift in their execution. A holy priest, he used the natural qualities of a clever businessman according to the *tantum-quantum* theory of St. Ignatius Loyola. He was humble, with a humility so perfectly balanced, so evenly developed, that even his own brethren could easily have had but little knowledge of his greatness. Like a perfect mozaic in which all the pieces are in perfect harmony and proportion and nothing is given undue prominence, one cannot at first glance absorb the vast dimensions of the whole. No doubt John McElroy had the defects which this flesh is heir to, but I have failed to discover them. It is probable he

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[1] Prov. Cat. 1877, p. 40. Vita functi. Died—age 96, in religion 71, on Sept. 12, 1877, at the Novitiate at Frederick.

[2] Woodstock Archives, McElroy Correspondence.

was quite impatient, as are most men of this type, with those endowed with lesser vigor and vision, and who were therefore unable to understand his motivation. Unquestionably, his was an ambitious nature tamed by a self-discipline, sterner than the ordinary mortal can muster. The rigorous demands he made upon himself inflamed his zeal to accomplish great things for God's greater honor and glory. I have called him "Lincoln in a cassock." This should cause no surprise, for much of the greatness of the Civil War President was due to his simple and unaffected humility.

And when the end came to Father McElroy, he could look back upon a lifetime well spent and on work well done, and we may fittingly close this long study with the words so eloquently written in his obituary: "McElroy could look upon the Church in the United States and say with truth: 'This is my *Diary.*' For in education, instruction, conversion and reformation in America he had helped to lay the foundation upon which others are building; yet, no word of his ever indicated that he considered himself anything but a simple priest . . . There was in him a kind of simple dignity and grave tenderness which spoke the saint . . . The world would call him 'a self-made man,' but the Grace of God made him what he was—and never was there a nobler piece of workmanship."

St. Ignatius in his Letters

The letters of St. Ignatius show us a mind sure, vast, profound, comprehensive, fitted for speculation or action. In the management of men and affairs, he stands eminent among the foremost the world has known. His judgment was clear and sure. With vision he read the hearts of men, and detected accurately the twistings and turnings, the ins and outs of their minds. He possessed a marvellous discretion in treating with all characters, classes, and conditions. Mature deliberation, firmness of resolve, skill in counsel, compelling persuasion, vigorous execution, were his. He showed courage in facing difficult undertakings, and perseverance in carrying them through, constancy in supporting adversity, and resourcefulness in surmounting obstacles. He was ready at all points, grasped all details, knew when to give way and when to insist, to yield or hold fast, as circumstances indicated, to show severity or mildness, condescension or determination, as the case required.

JUAN JOSÉ DE LA TORRE

Books of Interest to Ours

DELIGHTFUL READING

Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. *Translated by Ronald Knox.* New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons. Pp. 320. $4.50.

This is a new translation of the autobiography of the Little Flower. It has the approval of the Carmelites of Lisieux, and is published with the express desire that it should be the complete and authorized edition of the life of Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus. This new translation is fortunate in two ways: it has been made from the original text and not from that prepared for publication by Mother Agnes, the Saint's sister, which is generally known as *The Story of a Soul.* No effort has been spared to reproduce the exact words of the Little Flower, ultra-violet and ultra-red rays being used to achieve perfect accuracy. The second reason why the volume is fortunate is the fact that so distinguished an author and one so noted for his wide acquaintance with spiritual principles has been entrusted with its translation. That Monsignor Knox made it before his death is a guarantee of all that could be desired. It is as simple as the Little Flower herself and makes delightful reading.

J. Harding Fisher, S.J.

AN EXCELLENT JOB

Separated Brethren. *By William J. Whalen.* Milwaukee: Bruce, 1957. Pp. xii-284.

The subtitle of the book under consideration is: A survey of non-Catholic Christian denominations in the United States. This is an accurate description of the work. The author with degrees in journalism from Marquette and Northwestern has done an excellent job within the limits he himself has set. The book gives Catholics an accurate and friendly description of the non-Catholic Christian denominations in our country. It does not deal with particular church-groupings within the denominations nor are all the different non-Catholic churches described but those of greater importance are presented with clarity and readability. In dealing with so vast a subject, there are some mistakes, but the overall correctness makes this a valuable book for parish-priests and seminarists. Interestingly enough, the author includes a summary consideration on Masonry, far more objective than most Catholic presentations of the subject.

Gustave Weigel, S.J.

EDUCATIONAL COMMON SENSE

Mental Discipline in Modern Education. *By Walter B. Kolesnik.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1958. Pp. xi, 231. $3.50.

This is a book on education with two refreshing differences: it is brief and it is substantial. Dr. Kolesnik, who is now on the faculty at

the University of Detroit, has mastered a wild luxuriance of books, papers and research reports and manages to summarize and put in order their conclusions and implications in pages which are somewhat bleak in manner but admirably clear. The casual reader may not appreciate how much material has been distilled for him here but he cannot help but be instructed by the product.

The problem which Dr. Kolesnik discusses is one with special interest for educators in the conservative tradition. Everyone is aware that some twentieth century psychologists have rather effectively bombarded an older academic theory which put as the school's primary goal a sort of general training of intelligence for general efficiency. Experimental studies were supposed to have shown such an aim to be illusory. The present book is designed to review the evidence on both sides of this question and to determine what position may reasonably be held today. The argument proceeds, in part, through clarification of three interrelated but distinct concepts. The widest of these, that of "transfer of training," means that rather specific skills or habits can be applied to situations for which they had not been specifically learned. A boy who tinkered with farm machinery at home may show a special flair as an experimental physicist because he is handy at constructing apparatus. As Dr. Kolesnik observes, the possibility of transfer is generally admitted today and the debates are chiefly concerned with its range, conditions and the extent to which it can or should be exploited.

The second notion is that of "mental discipline" which is defined here as "the psychological view that man's mental capacities can somehow be trained to operate more efficiently 'in general,' and the philosophical conviction that such training constitutes one of the chief purposes of schooling." When Dr. Kolesnik has completed his survey of the significant research from the era of James, Thorndike and Woodworth down to the present he concludes that mental discipline in its broadest sense is still a reasonable educational objective and actually defended, in their various ways, by such antipodal philosophies as those of Hutchins and Dewey. The experimental evidence has, however, damaged one particularization of this theory. This is the "formal discipline" approach, with its characteristic accent on effort to the disparagement of interest and on form to the neglect of content. Its advocates have argued that such studies as Latin, Greek and mathematics are intellectual gymnastics peculiarly effective for the enlargement of certain basic intellectual powers—of observation, for example, or logical thought, or retention—which may afterwards be profitably applied to all situations. Kolesnik quotes one nineteenth century theorist who remarked confidently that "the immediate practical value of a subject and its disciplinary value are usually in an inverse ratio to each other."

But this lucid book suggests that the truth of the matter lies somewhere between outright rejection of general intellectual training and the inflated claims made for formal discipline. These informative chapters should, therefore, find interested readers among Jesuit teachers.

JOHN W. DONOHUE, S.J.

ALCOHOL AND A PRIEST

Prodigal Shepherd. *By Father Ralph Pfau and Al Hirshberg.* Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1958. Pp. 250. $3.95.

Here is a book of the literary genre of Lillian Roth's *I'll Cry Tomorrow,* autobiography of the ex-alcoholic. In it are portrayed all the symptoms, the blackouts, the compulsive drinking, the rationalizations, characteristic of alcoholism. These are presented not in cold theory but in the mind and body of a priest.

There are, however, no drinking bouts ending in theological drunkenness, no need of the helping hand to steer one home, no slumping in besotted satiety to the sidewalk. Indeed there need not be in the true alcoholic. There are weeks and sometimes months in which not one drop is imbibed. In fact for Father Pfau there is just one sure sign of oncoming alcoholism:

> My experience . . . is that the only static factor is the *element of increase.* If a person who has been drinking at least three years (a shorter period cannot give a conclusive result), finds that he is drinking increasingly more alcohol increasingly more often, he is *probably* on the road to alcoholism (p. 249).

This and similar facts and theories set down are based on the author's own experience and on personal conversations with some ten thousand alcoholics. There is no denying his right to speak with authority.

Nevertheless the story of Father Pfau's disease and recovery is in some respects atypical. It is not the clear picture of pure alcoholism but is blurred by the presence of a neurosis, which the author candidly admits. The dramatic breakdowns followed by therapy in institutions are to be explained chiefly, it would seem, by this emotional abnormality.

The book is a controversial one. When a popular magazine printed it in shortened form previous to publication, it occasioned an outcry. Should a priest make a public confession? People are still largely ignorant that alcoholism is a disease, not necessarily a sinful habit. To weigh the scandal and assess the undoubted good is no easy task. The difficulty would have been obviated had the author observed the anonymity which, for good reasons, is the policy of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Be that as it may, there is every reason to believe that the book will give great strength and encouragement to priests and others who suffer from this dread plague. The general audience will find it interesting and instructive reading.

ROBERT H. SPRINGER, S.J.

POSITIVE PENANCE

Approach to Penance. *By Dom Hubert Van Zeller, O.S.B.* New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958. Pp. 104. $2.50.

The subject of this group of essays is something that all Christians have thought about. The image which first appears in connection with penance is one of an emaciated, disheveled medieval monk. We know that this is not accurate, yet the true concept of penance—its purpose,

method and effect—is so difficult to achieve that the majority of us relegate the investigation to some never-to-arrive date in the future. Dom Van Zeller, a Benedictine of wide and thoughtful experience as a retreat master, superior and writer, offers a brief and precise analysis of the problem and concludes with a definite, practicable solution. After stating in the opening chapter that "the end of penance is God, not more penance," the author proceeds to show that penance is by nature positive, not negative, i.e., it leads to a clearly defined goal. He shows us how much penance to use and points out the area in our lives where it can easily be performed.

The primary value of this book seems to be its adaptation of a very necessary concomitant of the spiritual life to our current life and situation. In his chapter on the practice of penance, the author offers a very useful and safe method of introducing penance—as much as we wish—into our lives. He suggests passive penance, which is voluntary submission to the reverses and contradictions of each day, which come as a result of temperament, contact with others, state in life, age, health and surrounding circumstances. In this use of penance, obscure yet heroic, lies our sanctification or at least a sure step in the right direction.

In his closing chapters, Dom Van Zeller indicates the measure of penance to be used, some proofs that it is leading us to God—instead of merely inflating our spiritual self—and a final section about the insertion of penance as a part, at least but only a part, of our total spiritual life. The book does not provide particular solutions to particular problems, but surely it is a stride in the direction of adapting what in many cases is a lost practice to fit the present world which the Christian of today must strive to sanctify.

ARTHUR S. O'BRIEN, S.J.

PANORAMIC VIEW

A Popular History Of The Jesuits. *By Denis Meadows.* New York: Macmillan, 1958. Pp. x-160. $3.50.

This book presents a fine panoramic view of the history of the Society of Jesus. The fact that Mr. Meadows was able to hit the high spots of 400 years of Jesuit history and at the same time rather ably sketch the spirit of the Society is a tribute to his skill as a writer and historian. The author's approach is one of sincere friendship, an honest tribute of affection. This is not to imply that the subject is treated sentimentally or uncritically. The most serious objection is that a treatment of the American Assistancy is almost completely omitted. This would be more understandable had the book been published on the other side of the Atlantic. More stress could have been laid on the Society's part in the development of the American segment of the present day Church.

A few factual errors are scattered throughout the book. These in no way detract from the fact that, as a whole, the book is accurate. The examples mentioned below include the more serious of these errors:

Stanislaus studied under Peter Canisius; Father General Anderledy brought Jesuit scholasticism into line with the authentic tradition of Aquinas; by the end of the seventeenth century the Red Indian tribes had been virtually completely Christianized by the Jesuits.

The author's style runs smoothly and easily. The book can be read without effort. Our students should get a great deal from this book. It is a fine introduction to the Society and should serve to whet their appetites for further and deeper reading in the Society's history and hagiography. It is hoped that Mr. Meadows continues to write about the Society. We need more books by an author of his ability in history and with his literary skill.

CHARLES A. GALLAGHER, S.J.

CALL TO PERFECTION

Conferences on the Religious Life. *By Rev. Aloysius Biskupek, S.V.D.* Milwaukee: Bruce, 1957. Pp. iv-204. $3.50.

This collection of thirty-five conferences recalls the high ideals that should motivate every sincere religious. In well-ordered chapters the goal of self-sanctification and the salvation of others recurs as a dominant theme; but the reader is soon conscious of another unintentional minor theme playing along with it: that of an experienced spiritual director speaking about his favorite subject. While treating the important danger areas in living out the rules in a particular institute, the author is careful to note where obligation yields to the call for a higher degree of perfection. Young religious will find many of these chapters inspiring spiritual reading, and often sharp reminders.

PAUL OSTERLE, S.J.

SATAN

The Temptations of Christ. *By Gerald Vann, O.P. and P.K. Meagher, O.P.* New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957. Pp. 127. $2.75.

To claim that the devil does not exist is to play right into the devil's hands. To blame one's failings solely on one's own unruly passions or on some Freudian childhood trauma is to concede victory to the cunning of Satan. For it has been Satan's most brilliant triumph to capitalize on the materialism prevailing today and cast a doubt upon the minds of many concerning his own existence. This accomplished, he is relatively free to operate as he will. Though it may be difficult to attribute the sins of any one individual to the direct assault of Satan, the overall picture of fallen humanity still gives evidence of an organizing power of evil. If we refuse to recognize this power, we obviously cannot choose the proper mode of defense.

After treating of the nature of Christ's temptations in the desert, the *dramatis personae*, and the comparison between Christ's temptations and ours, the book takes up each temptation, interprets it, and makes applications. Christ related His temptations and His victory that we might profit. Christ was driven by the Spirit into the desert immediately after his baptism. So we, at the height of spiritual exaltation,

should prepare for the attacks of Satan. And it is in these trials that we come to know something of the mystery which we are. The temptations of Christ are the temptations of Israel in the desert and of all humanity: the desire for material goods, misuse of power, distrust of God's goodness, the perils of the pinnacle, presumption and vain glory. His conquest should be our conquest.

It is somewhat disconcerting to find in a book obviously intended for a wide reading public Latin phrases with no translations. The authors have written a very readable and scholarly book. They point out that the episode of Christ's temptations is a rich source for meditation. Many will profit by mulling over the ideas which their book so admirably expresses.

THOMAS H. CONNOLLY, S.J.

MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY

Crucial Problems of Modern Philosophy. *By D. J. B. Hawkins.* New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957. Pp. 150. $3.00.

Despite the universality of its title, *Crucial Problems of Modern Philosophy* is limited almost exclusively to problems of epistemology. Dr. Hawkins is convinced that Descartes asked a legitimate question when he began his search for the irreductible data with which philosophy begins. He is equally convinced that Descartes, and with him all of modern philosophy, has so narrowly limited the initial experience of perception that it has been impossible to find a satisfactory answer to the epistemological questions that have impeded philosophical progress for over three hundred years.

In his attempt to answer these questions, Dr. Hawkins begins with a survey which traces the theory of "representative ideas" from its beginnings in Descartes and the British empiricists down to the heroic but inadequate efforts of Kant to save something of knowledge from the debris left by Hume. Next he describes the modern epistemologies of Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein and the logical positivists. Finally, in a closing section he outlines a program for reconstruction in philosophy through the "enlargement of empiricism," i.e., through a reconsideration of the full experience of the embodied, actively knowing self.

The principal merit of Dr. Hawkins' book is not originality or depth of insight. We might even say that one of his principal concerns is to restore our sense of the obvious. On the other hand, Dr. Hawkins would never suggest that we escape from the difficulty of philosophical problems through recourse to untutored common sense. He is too aware of the nature of philosophical problems to suggest banal answers to serious questions. And it is this quality of seriousness about philosophy that makes his book most valuable. Not everyone will agree with his phenomenological analyses, but no one will question his philosophical integrity. As an example of how traditional philosophy must attempt to meet questions which have arisen outside the tradition, *Crucial Problems of Modern Philosophy* is recommended to all who are concerned with the problems of epistemology.

JOHN W. HEALEY, S.J.

CARDINAL WOLSEY

Naked To Mine Enemies. *By Charles W. Ferguson.* Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1958. Pp. 543. $6.00.

To communicate the personality behind the historical figure is one of the challenges which every good biographer must meet. Entertainment is at a minimum when one verifiable fact after another is strung together and called biography. To avoid this almanac style the person must be seen, and to be seen there must be well-chosen detail. Where are these details to come from? From the subject's diary if the biographer is lucky; from his personal letters more usually.

When Charles Ferguson turned to write this life of Wolsey, he was confronted with a man who had been an enigma for centuries. What was the driving force behind him? What were his real feelings as he passed through the dramatic events of the day? What explained the strange and inconsistent elements in his behaviour? Only if Wolsey's diary were to turn up, could we get a more intimate and living picture of the cardinal than we have in this work.

Diplomatic letters and papers, household reports, a smattering of eyewitness accounts, these are the sources used. By a masterful selection of details Ferguson has painted a vivid picture, and here lies the excellence of the book. For example, Wolsey doesn't just 'go to court' in such a way that the imagination of the reader leaps from his episcopal residence to the palace. No, his going is cast on the screen for you to see in all its detail. You are never allowed to forget that human beings like ourselves actually lived the event. The enfleshing of the cardinal helps to support the interpretations that the author makes concerning the personality of Wolsey.

Wolsey no longer appears an historical freak of his times but a highly plausible person whose actions are quite as intelligible as those of men today. The cold exterior which he showed to the world and which, if alone considered, would distort the true picture, is pierced and the man who wore the mask is revealed. Even in his brilliant rise we sympathise with him, for we are shown the compromises that will eventually bring him down. Manifold are the talents of a good biographer—industry, imagination, judgement, and broad sympathies. These are displayed to a high degree in this entertaining study. If the author experienced as much joy in the writing of the book as he has caused in the reading, we can happily expect more from the pen of Charles Ferguson.

WILLIAM SAMPSON, S.J.

READABLE AND BALANCED

In the Days of Gonzalo Garcia (1557-1597). *By J. H. Gense, S.J. and A. Conti, S.J.* Bombay: St. Xavier's College, 1957. Pp. vi-296. $2.00.

Saint Gonzalo Garcia was one of the 26 martyrs of Nagasaki canonized by Pope Pius IX on July 10, 1862. Born in Bassein, a city of Portuguese India, of a Portuguese father and an Indian mother, he

was educated by the Jesuits there after the death of his parents. At his own request he was sent to Japan where he served the Fathers as catechist for eight years. Disappointed in his desire to become a Jesuit, he lived as a merchant in Japan and Macao until accepted into the Franciscans in Manila as a lay brother. His knowledge of Japanese stood him in good stead, and he was one of four Franciscans sent to Japan as ambassadors in 1593. In Japan he worked for four more years before being martyred on February 5, 1597.

Beyond this bare outline little is known about the life of the saint. Father Gense with the able collaboration of Father Conti, a fellow missionary to India, has skillfully woven these facts into the background of the missionary history of the time; hence the title, *In the Days of Gonzalo Garcia*, is an apt one. The mission work of the Franciscans and particularly of the Jesuits in Bassein, Manila and Japan is described as it appears from letters and other documents. The use of sources is honest, and details from more "pious" Church historians of an earlier age are, for the most part, judiciously sifted.

It is an interesting and well-written work, scholarly but not heavy, devotional but not overstocked with pious fictions. Only rarely has the sparsity of source materials led the authors to engage in doubtful speculations. The choice of words is at times perhaps a little too contrived.

It is to be regretted that the authors chose to use parentheses within the text rather than footnotes to indicate their sources and that there is no index, though perhaps this was dictated by the needs of economy. There are also a number of misprints and a few incomplete or erroneous references. These defects, though minor, are all the more unfortunate since, in addition to giving us a readable account of the period, the authors have offered several significant historical judgments where the sources are notoriously biased by pro-Jesuit or pro-Franciscan prejudice. For example, the blame for the condemnation of the martyrs of Nagasaki is laid solely at the door of the shogun Hideyoshi, and both Franciscans and Jesuits are absolved of the charges which they have leveled against one another down to our own times.

Because of the intimate picture it affords of the Society's mission work of the period, Ours should read this inexpensive and informative addition to missionary literature.

ROBERT RUSH, S.J.

LAY APOSTOLATE

World Crisis And The Catholic. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958. Pp. xiv-231. $3.00.

Critics of Christian Universalism will find no cause to cheer this unique transnational volume. It is a symposium commemorating the Second World Congress for the Lay Apostolate. The twenty contributors are prominent laymen distinguished in their secular professions. The essays present personal views of intelligent Catholics assessing the role of the Church and the laity in the accelerated crisis of our changing civilization.

German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer speaks for the Christian statesman. Author and psychiatrist Karl Stern inspects Group Thinking. CIO-AFL President George Meany analyzes technical progress and human dignity. Renowned mathematician Francesco Severi enters a plea for recognition of the Creator amid the scientific discovery of creation's secrets. Medical psychologist Lopez-Ibor discusses modern medicine's rediscovery of the personal factor in disease. Actress Ann Blyth weighs the responsibility of the artist toward cultural habits. The appeal of Christian art is Swiss architect Hermann Baur's theme. French diplomat Wladimir d'Ormesson underlines the duty of the Christian to nourish social solidarity.

The chapter on the World Community features: Giorgio la Pira, dynamic Mayor of Florence; Marga Klompe, Holland's Minister for Social Welfare; Belgian economist Raymond Scheyven; Kotaro Tanaka, Chief Justice of Japan's Supreme Court. All ask for intercontinental unity based on recognition of interdependence, if there is to be international justice, peace and economic development. Philosopher John Wu, historian Christopher Dawson, Vice-President Myung Chang of Korea and King Rudahigwa of Ruanda in central Africa see in universal Christianity, purged of superficial western accretions, the true saving synthesis for the modern world.

In the final chapter Bruce Marshall, Brazil's Gustave Corçao and French sociologist Joseph Folliet remind the layman that he is the value bearer of the message of Christ to the non-christian world. Gertrude von le Fort closes with a poetic epilogue. This book cannot be ignored by those interested in the temporal function of the layman's apostolic vocation.

JOHN PHELAN, S.J.

AS THE SAINTS WRITE

Letters From The Saints. *Compiled by Claude Williamson.* New York: Philosophical Library, 1958. Pp. x-214. $6.00.

Something different in the way of anthology, this selection of letters from saints and blessed should prove interesting and inspiring to a variety of readers. Students of hagiography or asceticism will find exemplified a kaleidoscope of human individuality ordered and unified by the common factor of selfless love which is Christian sanctity. For the historically orientated these letters penetrate beneath the somewhat cold facts and figures of early Renaissance and Reformation periods to reveal the persons whose natural talents were fashioned by grace into instruments that etched God's designs on ecclesiastical and world history. Finally, to the reader in search of satisfying recreation and spiritual stimulation this book offers a rewarding familiarity with the cares, hopes, joys and sorrows of many whose heroism exemplifies the refreshing selflessness of God-centered living.

Scholars, penitents, ecclesiastics and laymen, religious, both contemplative and active, such are the authors of this collection. Letters from such as Thomas More, Teresa of Avila, Xavier and Philip Neri reveal

the attitudes and motivation of these more widely known saints. The reader will also be introduced to the perhaps less familiar personages of Angela of Foligno, John Forest, Jean Lestonnac and others. Brief bibliographical sketches accompany the letters of the individual saints and blessed, and Father Williamson has added a short list of the more important sources and collated lives of saints at the end of the book.

Some letters are but fragmentary; only a few continue for more than two pages. Subject matter is as varied as the personalities and states of life of the authors. The translations are in general quite readable. Father Williamson remarks that some of the originals could be classified as stylistically illiterate, since the saints' preoccupations were not those of literary excellence. Such artlessness, however, often enhances the self-revelation of the saint in question.

Obviously, such an anthology will not satisfy the interest of those particularly devoted to this or that saint. Perhaps some will not approve of the compiler's choice of letters, arguing that they fail to reveal the true spirit of a favorite saint or blessed. The reader, however, will bear with such shortcomings, born of an anthology's limitations; he will gratefully reflect that such flaws do not substantially detract from the enjoyment and inspiration that Father Williamson's labors have made available to him.

ALFRED E. MORRIS, S.J.

WRITINGS ON IGNATIUS

Bibliographie Ignatienne (1894-1957). *By J. F. Gilmont, S.J.* and *P. Daman, S.J.* Paris-Louvain: Desclée de Brouwer, 1958. Pp. xxviii-251.

In his preface, Father Hugo Rahner, S.J. points out today's growing realization of the great value that a better knowledge of Ignatian spirituality has not only for the Society of Jesus but also for the Church of the present day. As an instrument for the gaining of such knowledge, this bibliography is complete and scholarly. Covering the period from 1894 to July, 1957, it contains listings of nearly three thousand articles and books in seven major languages, which have treated of Ignatius the man, his writings and his spirituality. There is also an index according to author and one according to subject matter. The worth of such a bibliography for the scholar and for the follower of St. Ignatius is apparent to anyone who examines it.

ROYDEN B. DAVIS, S.J.

SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

Communism and Christianity. *By Martin C. D'Arcy.* New York: The Devin-Adair Co., 1957. Pp. xii-242. $4.00.

Though Christians are increasing in numbers, percentagewise in today's mushrooming population they are decreasing. Vital as is the Church's missionary activity, there is another force which seems at times more vital still, the force of Communism with its sense of urgency and with the frightening dedication of its apostles. Father D'Arcy's timely book, with a sure feel for the essential, has drawn the opposing

battle lines so as to make clear exactly where the struggle lies. Confusion on this point to a great extent accounts for the failure of Christianity's rich message effectively to counter the Communist lie. It is not for its Utopian ideal that Communism is to be condemned, nor for its zeal, nor even precisely for the ruthlessness of some of its methods. For Christianity too concerns itself with the working poor, is zealous, and sometimes zealous in a misguided way. Nor is the conflict between democracy and totalitarianism, or peace and war, or sincerity and maliciousness; it is between two world views.

A half-truth and a clear-cut future goal are the key to Communism's appeal. Its theory of predictable materialistic man gives security to the uncertain poor. Its vision of a future peaceful and prosperous world fires the imagination. In just these two points the Christian message should surpass Communism's appeal. For the Christian sees man as spiritual, free, and even divinized through the Incarnation. And the goal is not a misty future one that present generations can never see. The Christian sees an imperishable reward for each single individual, for each single action.

In a finely nuanced presentation drawn from Communism's founders and from his own profound grasp of Christianity's contemporary relevance, Father D'Arcy points up the real issues involved. His hope is that the Christian, with clear insight into his own vision and goal, will give a single-minded Christian response to Marx's ringing challenge: "Philosophers have explained the world; it is necessary to change it."

EDWARD V. STEVENS, S.J.

CLAUDEL ON SCRIPTURE

The Essence of the Bible. *By Paul Claudel.* Translated by Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library, 1957. Pp. 120. $3.00.

A translation of *J'aime la Bible,* this volume collects Claudel's final essays on Scripture. The French title better explains their nature: they are the poet's personal tribute of praise, gratitude, and enthusiasm for this book which had nourished the latter half of his long and fruitful life. These varied essays may be put into two categories: reflex essays on Claudel's own approach to Scripture, and its direct application to such topics as the prophetic spirit, Our Lady, and the nature of evil.

Claudel adopts an extreme position in scriptural interpretation; his overwhelming emphasis is on its spiritual sense. When he affirms, he offers much rich insight; when he denies and rejects, the result is less fortunate. An example will clarify: "The Old Testament must be given back to the Christian people. They must be given back for their own use their great edifice of the Bible, shorn of all the pseudoscientific apparatus of arbitrary conjectures and frivolous hypotheses that serve but to dishearten, to disconcert and to rebuff the faithful; to deafen them to such an extent that they, surrounded by the ridiculous clatter of scribes incapable of arriving at anything in the least articulate or positive, no longer hear the loud voice of the prophets" (p. 29).

This is not to say that Claudel is advocating a fundamentalist, subjective interpretation and use of Scripture. Rather he wants a return to the patristic and liturgical use of Scripture. Rightly he maintains that there is a strong unity in the Bible: it is Christ (and that which is closest to Him—Our Lady and the Church). For Claudel, to read the Old Testament in terms of Christ is not mere hindsight; it is a case of final causality that was operative from the very beginning. Somehow it was present to the sacred writer, at least *in spiritu*. Granted that this is an extremely complex problem that has received no definitive resolution, Claudel pushes his point beyond moderation. Though all his positive affirmations could be independently justified, taken in conjunction with his extreme language against the primacy of the literal sense they are not in keeping with present Catholic biblical thought.

This volume contains the article from *Vie intellectuelle* (1949), and two follow-up letters which were not printed, in which Claudel proposes his views and attacks, very sharply, those who emphasize the literal sense, especially when explained with the aid of linguistics, archeology, comparative religion, etc. His controversy is mainly with Jean Steinmann. Writings of A. Gelin and A. M. Dubarle are criticized by name. Perhaps Claudel's emphasis is a necessary corrective of current biblical scholarship that not only awes but often confuses the pious faithful. But as Dom Charlier remarks in *The Christian Approach to the Bible* after telling of the contribution of Claudel and others writing in the same vein: "All the same, the grave shortcomings of scientific exegesis do not justify a swing to the other extreme. The over-insistence on the human aspect of the Bible in the past does not mean that this aspect can now be neglected. The scientific method has a great contribution to make, and it cannot be ignored simply because of its inevitable faults."

The second category of essays in this volume, Claudel's reflections on the prophetic spirit, Our Lady, and the nature of evil, that were generated and nurtured by his reading of Scripture, cannot be summarized but can only be described. They are distinctly Claudelian: an apparently undirected flow of thoughts and images, one somehow being born from the other, all together producing an impression or attitude that is rarely propositional. But they are far from Claudel at his best. Here and there comes a rewarding flash of his earlier genius, but it is clouded by too much rhetoric that is needlessly unclear or repetitious.

JOHN S. NELSON, S.J.

TRAPPIST ELOQUENCE

Thoughts in Solitude. *By Thomas Merton.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1958. Pp. 124. $3.00.

Thomas Merton became a Trappist in 1942. Although we know much of his early life from the *Seven Storey Mountain*, he has preferred that the exteriors of his life at Gethsemane be relatively unknown. Even his spiritual journals, he tells us, try to be objective, not just the workings of his own soul, but of all souls. He has eloquence, a paradox in a

man whose life is dedicated to silence. It is an eloquence that persuades, that moves a man's mind and heart in search of God.

Merton has had a varied output: autobiography, history, a treatise on the Eucharist, poetry, biography. Then there are his reflections: *Seeds of Contemplation, No Man is an Island,* and finally *Thoughts in Solitude.*

It is difficult to analyze such a book. Its charm, its value, consists in the new and revealing manner in which old truths are expressed. In the book a theme often elaborated by Merton reappears: Man's need to face reality; the inner urgency in man to see himself and the universe and God in true relationship. "The death by which we enter into life is not an escape from reality but a complete gift of ourselves which involves a total commitment to reality. It begins by renouncing the illusory reality which created things acquire when they are seen only in their relation to our own selfish interests."

The first part of the book develops "Aspects of the Spiritual Life." Here he reflects on some of the qualities necessary for a man to live a life of union with God. Among others there is self-conquest, "the conquest of ourselves, not by ourselves, but by the Holy Spirit. Self-conquest is really self-surrender." There is a need for man to experience his nothingness. "To love our nothingness we must love ourselves."

The second half of the book reflects on the "Love of Solitude." He defines a vocation to solitude: "To deliver oneself up, to hand oneself over, entrust oneself completely to the silence of a wide landscape of woods and hills, or sea, or desert." This is the special vocation to solitude, the one to which Merton and his brethren at Gethsemane find themselves called. But further, "a man becomes a solitary at the moment when, no matter what may be his external surroundings, he is suddenly aware of his own inalienable solitude and sees that he will never be anything but solitary." All mature men, all men developed in God, insists Merton, must come to that realization.

GERARD F. GIBLIN, S.J.

CHINESE CAPTIVITY

I Met a Traveller. *By Kurt Becker, S.J.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1958. Pp. 208. $3.50.

"This story," writes Father Becker, "whose chief virtue is that it is a true story, focuses on one man, his lone struggle, and his triumph." The man is a California Jesuit, Father Tom Phillips; his lone struggle took place in a Chinese Communist prison cell from 1953-1956. And his triumph? "After the Communist masters in China had flung the weight of their power and authority at one small individual, the man was still standing . . . Secret police, informers, jailers, judges, prisons, endless probing, brutal and determined, could not break the man. He proved stronger and tougher than the great monster."

The spirit suffusing *I Met a Traveller* is, incredibly, one of profound peace. In the harrowing time of furious apostolic activity and day-to-

day terror before his imprisonment; in the summary midnight arrest in his rectory; even (or perhaps especially) during the three cruel years in the infamous prison of Loukawei in Shanghai, Father Phillips' peace of soul and trust in God never fail him. He answers terror with peace, cruelty with kindness, brutality with the gentleness of Christ.

There are moments in this book that are profoundly moving for the Jesuit or priest reader, as when one of Father Phillips' parishioners, in the midnight cold of his solitary Christmas, plays "Puer Natus" on a Chinese flute beneath the prison walls, at the risk of his life. There is the moment when, for the first time in almost three years, Father Phillips brings Christ into his prison cell in a secret Mass. And there is (for this is a deeply honest book) the brief account of those who were not heroes, the Jesuits who broke under the "unrelenting pressure" of the Communists.

Father Becker writes with insight and skill, and his lucid style is a perfect match for Father Phillips' story. He is excellent (albeit frightening) when he draws conclusions for the reader from Father Phillips' experiences on the nature of the totalitarian state in China, or on the vastness and efficiency of the Communist enterprise. For Father Becker, Father Phillips' story is "a miniature, a reflection of a far greater struggle which finds the two absolutes, the Church and the Communists, facing each other across the world." Shelley's poem *Ozymandias* ("I met a traveller from an antique land . . .") , from which Father Becker takes his title, is used as a representation of this struggle with Communism and its outcome. Mighty Ozymandias brooded long over the world, but "in the end, there was an end." As Father Phillips' triumphed, so will the Church.

For the Jesuit and the Catholic especially, but indeed for all Americans, this book is an important document in the history of the struggle against Communism.

J. Robert Barth, S.J.

CATHOLIC DICTIONARY

Short Dictionary of Catholicism. *By C. H. Bowden.* New York: Philosophical Library, 1958. Pp. 158. $2.75.

This book is put forth as a "small guide and introduction to Catholicism." Bowden employs a strict dictionary form, providing one or two sentence definitions of subjects pertaining to Catholic life and worship. Under each letter of the alphabet there are about fifty to seventy items. The definitions provided are adequate for the most part, but frequently the wording is inept or misleading and some would not satisfy a demanding theologian. Particularly on the subject of miracles and relics this dictionary states categorically many things that some might question. Thus, the author unqualifiedly informs us that we still have authentic remains of Veronica's Veil, the chains of St. Peter and Christ's blood. With these qualifications, it is a usable book on the elementary level, which may provide the lay Catholic with an aid in his reading concerning the Church.

William J. Bosch, S.J.

A FATHER'S LOVE

More Than Many Sparrows. *By Leo J. Trese.* Chicago: Fides Publishers, 1958. Pp. 137. $2.95.

Father Leo Trese has become one of the most popular of modern spiritual writers because of his literary style and his deft insights into religious matters. The reader who enjoyed his former books such as *Man Approved* and *Many Are One* will not be disappointed by this author's latest book, *More than Many Sparrows*, a selection of essays from his syndicated column "This We Believe." Prevading all of these brief studies is a strong positive approach very much in line with modern kerygmatic principles. The major stress is placed upon the importance of the individual in God's sight and the need for a personal consciousness of His love on the part of each soul. The other fundamental virtues—humility, zeal, purity, etc.—are treated in the light of this love. The author also illustrates the place of these virtues in practical everyday living and their relationship to the totality of Christian development. While there are many striking psychological insights in these essays, the reader will find that their main strength lies in the vivid, concrete, and direct presentation of each topic. These qualities can be both an inspiration and a model for sermon style and an indication of the proper manner of presenting religious truths forcefully.

WILLIAM J. BOSCH, S.J.

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

Samaria the Capital of the Kingdom of Israel. *By André Parrot.* Studies in Biblical Archaeology No. 7. Translated by S. H. Hooke. New York: Philosophical Library, 1958. Pp. 143. $2.75.

Babylon and the Old Testament. *By André Parrot.* Studies in Biblical Archaeology No. 8. Translated by B. E. Hooke. New York: Philosophical Library, 1958. Pp. 166. $2.75.

These two monographs on Samaria and Babylon are the latest in a series of concise studies in biblical archaeology well calculated to meet with the critical approval of the specialist and the interest of the general reader alike. André Parrot, museum curator and director of the Mari Archaeological Expedition, possesses the technical competence to guarantee the scientific reliability of his archaeological commentaries on Old Testament subjects. To his expert knowledge are joined a balanced judgment and the ability to present in compendious form a mass of complex data in a way that is both accurate and interesting. The first chapter of the study on Samaria is devoted to an historical survey of the kingdom of Israel and its capital city, Samaria, following closely the data and chronology found in the Books of Kings. A second chapter examines the archaeological findings of the several excavations made at the site of Israelite Samaria and supplies valuable corroboration for many of the details of the biblical narrative. Subsequent chapters retell the fate of Samaria at the hands of a series of foreign conquerors after the final loss of independence by the northern kingdom. The reader

is thus provided with the pertinent background material for an adequate understanding of the unique character and importance of Samaria in New Testament times.

The monograph on Babylon is divided into two sections. The first is a presentation of the archaeological findings of the several scientific explorations at the site of ancient Babylon. Detailed consideration is given to the results of the excavations conducted by Koldewey, for to these scholars we are chiefly indebted for the information which serves as the scientific basis for the various reconstructions that have been made of the wonders of ancient Babylon, such as the hanging gardens and the tower of Babel. The second half of the study treats of the crucial role of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom in the history of the chosen people. This discussion well exemplifies the capital importance of the contribution which modern archaeological discoveries are making to an understanding of the literal meaning of the sacred text.

Both of these studies are profusely and attractively illustrated and their value is enhanced by the addition of chronological and synoptic tables. The selective and up-to-date bibliographies provide adequate guidance for the interested reader who wishes to go beyond these excellent introductory studies.

J. D. SHENKEL, S.J.

A GREAT AMERICAN JESUIT

The Record of an American Priest: Michael Earls, S.J., 1873-1937. *By William L. Lucey, S.J.* New York: Reprinted from The American Ecclesiastical Review, 1957. Pp. 41.

Few American Jesuits reached a wider audience than did Father Michael Earls during the first three decades of the present century. He achieved prominence by reason of his extensive writings (novels, poetry and short stories), his distinguished teaching career at Holy Cross College and his lecturing and preaching to wide and varied audiences. Father Earls was undoubtedly one of the most noted and universally respected Jesuits in the literary and educational fields from the turn of the century until his death in 1937. Such a distinguished career deserves recognition. Father Lucey, in rendering that recognition, has made a significant contribution to Jesuit Americana.

RICHARD P. NOONAN, S.J.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Happiness and Contemplation. *By Josef Pieper.* New York City: Pantheon Books Inc., 1958. Pp. 125. $2.75.

In the fourth chapter of his book the author adverts to works like Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* and St. Thomas's *Summa* to bring out a point on the nature of happiness. In so doing he makes this remark, "It is no secret that nowadays we cannot muster up much patience or inclination for reading of this sort." In saying this of St. Thomas and St. Augustine I believe that Dr. Pieper has unintentionally passed judgment on his own book. He senses that what St. Thomas and St. Au-

gustine had to say and the way in which they said it are somewhat out of keeping with the mentality and outlook of our times. This is not to say that their statements are invalid or untrue. It is simply to express an awareness that each age finds it necessary to discover truth for itself and in its own way. It refuses often to listen to the argument from authority. Our age seems to feel this necessity to a much greater degree than some ages in the past.

It is this lack of rapport with his reading public that makes Dr. Pieper's book difficult to assess. To prove his case, that contemplation is essentially the activity by which man achieves happiness, it is not enough simply to state it. The author must make an attempt to state it in terms and accents familiar to his reading public. The greater the separation between reader and author, the greater the effort required of the author to render his reader *docilis* and *benevolens*. These may be considered mere rhetorical necessities, but it must be realized that without them there can be no communication of ideas.

ROBERT F. MCDONALD, S.J.

PREPARATION FOR CRISES

Fathering-forth. By John H. McGoey, S.F.M. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1958. Pp. viii-188. $3.50.

What changes should be made in seminary training to better prepare the seminarians to face today's challenges and to achieve "effective work and a successful apostolate?" This is the question Father McGoey poses in his first chapter and in the twenty-one chapters that follow he gives his vigorous answer.

Early in a seminarian's training he must be taught the meaning of the crises he will face as a priest: difficult pastors, little appreciation for his ideas and work from his fellow priests, the insistent hunger for human love, temptations to turn bitter, and many more. These crises are really mysterious graces which God sends or allows in order to free him from all ill-ordered attachments. To fail to accept them as graces would be a terrible tragedy for truly effective work in his priestly life. Once he has grasped the meaning of these crises, he will be disposed to attack the sources of the disorder, "I" trouble and avarice in its many forms; and he will counter with supernatural honesty and generosity, the practical tests for genuine humility. Much can be done during his years of training to develop positive, constructive thinking and a sense of responsibility with respect to prayer, work and mortification which will carry him through the years of his ministry. For if he is to lead his people to a high degree of sanctity, he must soon learn to be the kind of priest fervent Catholics expect him to be. Striving for this ideal, he will come to know what kind of priest God expects him to be.

Besides the obvious benefit a priest or seminarian can derive for himself in reading these reflections, this book can help to give us a deeper sympathy for the problems and temptations in the everyday life of parish priests.

PAUL OSTERLE, S.J.

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